

THE **WORKERS** AGAINST NET NEUTRALITY • IS BUSH **VOLDEMORT?**

APRIL 2007

IN THESE TIMES

Israeli Air Force
refuseniks speak out

Frances Kissling:
pro-choice **heretic**

THIS APRIL ...
RED + BLUE GO

GREEN



The **climate change** movement comes
to your hometown

BY BILL MCKIBBEN

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WATCH FOR THIS MAN

INCORRUPTIBLE, WISE, SIMPLE OF SPEECH

❖ He will advocate sharing the world's food and resources more equitably among nations...

Every year millions of people die needlessly from starvation, disease, and war. Millions more struggle to survive on less than \$1 a day. As long as this injustice persists, we will never know peace.

❖ He will call for massive emergency relief...

An immediate program to provide basic necessities for the poorest areas of the world—perhaps in the form of a global Marshall Plan—will be the first of many changes needed.

❖ He will turn our attention to the environment...

Pollution is the #1 killer in the world today, and new reports say the consequences of global warming will come sooner and be more catastrophic than expected if we fail to act in time.

❖ With his help we will see that all life is one...

Acting as one human family, we will rebuild our world along more just and compassionate lines, and thus create the only basis for lasting peace.

❖ His public work will soon begin...

As millions worldwide take up his call for peace through sharing, he will acknowledge his role as World Teacher, the one awaited under different names by people of all religions and by those who simply wish for a better life for all—a Teacher for all humanity.

WHO IS THIS MAN?

www.TheEmergence.org/itt

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Democracy Haters

HOW MUCH OPPOSITION to the Iraq War must be expressed in America before Congress takes note and does something?

This simple question tears away the veneer of antiwar platitudes and pro-democracy rhetoric that spews from the nation's capital. It has been four months since voters delivered an antiwar mandate, and the Washington establishment no longer pretends to care about the public will.

As opposition to the war has increased and as the progressive movement has demanded action from Congress, Beltway voices have expressed their disgust with democracy. In November, Vice President Dick Cheney appeared on national television to say that the war "may not be popular with the public—it doesn't matter." In March, Rep. Stephanie Herseth (D-S.D.) attacked Democratic proposals to end the war: "I don't think we should be overreacting to public opinion polls."

The same disdain for voters is expressed by the corporate media. In early March, the *New York Times* reported that the most intensely antiwar Democrats are on the "fringe," despite the *Times'* own poll showing growing public outrage at the war. This followed the paper's columnist David Brooks, who lashed out at those who would challenge pro-war Democrats: "Polarized primary voters shouldn't be allowed to define the choices in American politics."

These statements imply opposition to the war is recent, fleeting and somehow illegitimate. But since August 2003—a few months after the invasion—polls have consistently shown that Americans think the Bush administration misled us into Iraq, and that Congress should put the brakes on the war. By the eve of the 2006 election, polls showed opposition to the Iraq War at an all-time high.

After the election, as President Bush announced his plan to escalate the war and congressional Democrats responded with non-binding resolutions, a CNN poll found that a strong majority wants Congress to cut off funding for the so-called

"surge." Meanwhile a *Washington Post* poll found that a majority of Americans want a timeline for withdrawal and want Congress to do what it takes to stop Bush's escalation—positions the corporate media would have us believe are "fringe" and people like Herseth et al. oppose in the name of faux "centrism" and "not overreacting."

So what to do?

First, progressives can look for alternative routes of pressure. Washington politicians may ignore polls, but they might feel less comfortable ignoring their own state governments. With the help of the Progressive States Network, resolutions demanding Congress stop President Bush's military escalation in Iraq have been introduced in 29 states and passed chambers in Iowa, California, Vermont, New Jersey and North Dakota.

An interaction featured on YouTube illustrates a second critical point. The video shows activists aggressively criticizing Rep. David Obey (D-Wisc.) for not doing enough to end the war. Obey reminds them that he voted against the war and has used his position on the Appropriations Committee to try to slow down the administration's actions in Iraq. But, he says, the Democratic votes do not yet exist to cut off funding for the war.

Congress members must be pressured in a targeted fashion to help lawmakers like Obey garner the votes needed for strong action. Conversely, blanket attacks potentially alienate the allies we do have—like the members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus who are thankfully starting to play hardball with the Democratic leadership on the war.

The cop-out for progressives is to declare a pox on Capitol Hill and give up. That's what the anti-democratic zealots in Washington want us to do, and why their attacks on the majority of Americans become ever more shrill. But the louder they squeal, the more we know we are closer to our goal. If the progressive movement perseveres and picks its targets carefully, Congress will be forced to end this war.

—David Sirota

IN THESE TIMES

"With liberty and justice for all..."

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mixed reaction



19.7 Metric tons of CO₂ emissions released in the United States per person in 1996.

1.2–1.4 Increase in degrees Fahrenheit of the Earth's surface since 1900.

4.5 Pounds of waste created in the United States per person per day.

39 Number of countries in which *An Inconvenient Truth* was released.

52 Percentage rise in combined sales of hybrid vehicles in the United States since February 2006.

“ For the first time in history, my community has had to use air conditioners. Imagine that, air conditioners in the Arctic. ”

—INUIT LEADER SHEILA WATT-CLOUTIER,
QUOTED IN SIERRA CLUB CURRENTS, MARCH 6, 2007

LABANARAMA BY TERRY LABAN



QUID PRO QUO

THE QUID:

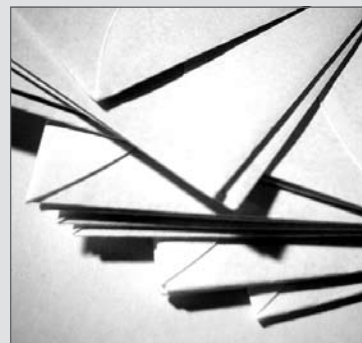
Recently, Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.) discussed those gloomy days last year when he was abandoned by Democratic Party voters. But it turns out that he wasn't left all alone—just in the dark about who his friends were, on account of pesky federal election laws.

At the Credit Union National Association (CUNA) Governmental Affairs Conference in February, Lieberman thanked the trade group for the nearly \$250,000 it secretly spent in the final days of his primary cam-

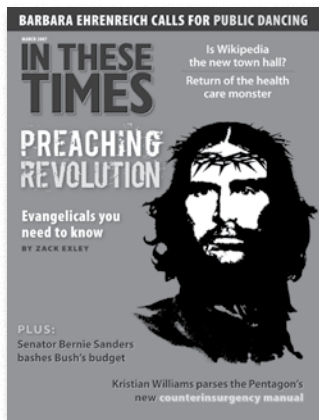
paign, and again in the general election, on mass mailings aimed at revving up the Joementum. Election laws barred CUNA from disclosing the campaigns before the election, but now it can step forward and accept the thanks of a grateful nation.

THE QUO:

To be honest, we're not quite sure yet. But you can be certain it's coming. Lieberman himself told the crowd, "I will say that I owe you for your support. Without that support, I wouldn't be here."



letters



God damn!

Zack Exley's "Preaching Revolution," (March) was so lacking in hard reporting and analysis it could have been written by Jim Wallis' press secretary. Only one uncritical mention of the opposition of these supposed "revolutionaries" to abortion rights, gay rights and sex as anything but marital! (And no follow-up on how these views will affect their HIV/AIDS outreach.)

No discussion of the hard questions of separation of church and state. No interrogation of the repulsive propaganda term "bible-believing Christian"—as if other kinds of Christians don't believe in the Bible.

Exley says these "revolutionaries" don't care about left or right, but only doing "what God wants." A real reporter might have asked how they decide what that is.

Finally, how can the left embrace a movement that wants everyone in the world to be an evangelical Christian? That doesn't sound too "anti-imperialist" to me.

*Katha Pollitt
New York*

ZACK EXLEY RESPONDS

Most of the "Revolutionary Evangelicals" I wrote about probably believe in a stronger separation of church and state than even the ACLU. As for wanting everyone to become evangelical Christians: They believe that spreading the Gospel means living it in service of the poor and oppressed, not making others say some phrase that starts, "I accept Jesus" When Heather Zydek said, "Bible-believing Christians" she did in fact mean all Christians who

"Preaching Revolution" was so lacking in hard reporting and analysis it could have been written by Jim Wallis' press secretary.

believe in the Bible, not only evangelicals.

I did address how they decide "what God wants:" they read the Bible and pray. I tried to show that their prayers are framed in an analysis of modern capitalism and imperialism, and that process of prayer and Bible study is—surprisingly for most of us on the left—leading them to radical sacrifice for the poor and oppressed.

Their views on gay rights, abortion and sex outside of marriage are too complex to cover inside an article not devoted entirely to that topic (and this short response). But those views differ significantly from the Christian Right. How does their theology affect their work on HIV/AIDS? It drives them to love (deeply)

those affected. The teaching that stands out in my mind most clearly from the HIV/AIDS session at the conference mentioned in my article was this: "You can't help fight AIDS in America if you don't have close gay friends—and if you can't learn how to sit down, shut up and listen."

Brand new?

Stephen Duncombe's "Dreaming Up New Politics," (February) has re-sparked a needed discussion of tactics, strategy and objectives. His urging that we reconsider our

Aside from the creeping threat of further commercialization of our movements and organizations, expropriating the techniques of branding is pointless if one lacks the resources to successfully carry out such a campaign. Branding campaigns for grassroots organizations can be like wanting to fight on enemy terrain but not being able to afford the entry fee. Even when a high powered advertising firm generously donates their expertise to develop a branded media campaign many organizations end up only being able to afford a few thousand postcards and one donated billboard on an side-street obtained after a time consuming search.

Instead of grafting on the very models causing the very problems we are trying to solve, we need to learn from successes in the most unlikely places that can help us realize what C.L.R. James called "the future in the present."

*Robert Ovetz
Sausalito, Calif.*

Darwin and Science?

BY KURT VONNEGUT

DARWIN
GAVE THE
CACHET
OF SCIENCE
TO WAR
AND
GENOCIDE.



contributors

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to announce that *In These Times* has received a grant from the Puffin Foundation of Teaneck, N.J. and with that support has established the Puffin Foundation First Amendment Fund. The fund will provide ongoing, invaluable support to *In These Times* journalists. This will help ensure that the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment, which, in addition to freedom of the press, includes "the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances," will always be defended on these pages.

As Perry and Gladys Rosenstein, Puffin Foundation president and executive director, write in their annual report, "Knowledgeable and conscientious journalists of the Fourth Estate are the watchdogs who keep the 'window of truth' open for all to see."

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Joel Bleifuss
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BILL MCKIBBEN last wrote for *In These Times* in April 2001, "Now or Never: What's an Environmentalist to Do?" McKibben "steps it up" in Ripton, Vt., on land once owned by Robert Frost, where he lives with his wife, Sue Halpern, and daughter, Sophie.



APRIL HOWARD is a teacher and journalist. **BENJAMIN DANGL** is the author of *The Price of Fire: Resource Wars and Social Movements in Bolivia*, (AK Press, 2007) and edits *Toward-Freedom.com*. Both are editors at *UpsideDownWorld.org*, a news Web site on South America. They have traveled and written around South America together for more than five years. When they aren't walking through soy fields in Paraguay, mines in Bolivia or protests in Venezuela, they call Vermont home.



LEAH NELSON graduated from Columbia University's J-school in 2006. She is currently freelancing and job-hunting, and is cautiously optimistic about the future. Nelson lives in New York with her fiancé, Jason, as well as lots of books and an unreasonably large TV. This is her third article for *In These Times*.

MARCY WHEELER is the author of *Anatomy of Deceit*—a primer on the CIA leak and the dicey intelligence claims the administration used to justify the war. She was a key liveblogger of the Scooter Libby trial and blogs regularly at *The Next Hurrah*. She received a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan and works as an independent business consultant in Michigan.



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CATHOLICS FOR A FREE CHOICE

A Pain, and Proud of It

Frances Kissling retires after 25 years at CFFC

BY ANN FRIEDMAN

ON FEB. 6, WHEN William Donohue, leader of the conservative Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, attacked John Edwards' campaign for hiring two feminist bloggers who had been sharply critical of church doctrine, Frances Kissling declared that Donohue did not speak for all Catholics. It wasn't the first time Kissling and Donohue squared off, but it would be their last public tussle.

Less than three weeks later, Kissling stepped down as president of Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC), which has served as a dissenting Catholic voice on matters of reproductive and women's rights since 1973. After 25 years, Kissling said, she felt her leadership was bordering on predictable and that CFFC would be invigorated by a new president. Donohue's Catholic League Web site gleefully announced, "Good Riddance to Frances Kissling." And the equally hard-line Catholic Family and

Human Rights Institute crowed, "Kissling has been an outspoken opponent of Catholic Church teachings on contraception, abortion, gay rights and stem cell research, but has failed to change any of them."

But Kissling's long-stated goal is not to change Catholic doctrine on these issues, but to initiate conversation about them. For 25 years, Kissling has pointed out that criticizing church doctrine and agitating for reform is not anti-Catholic. "[T]he bloggers had a lot to say about religion and a lot to say that's critical of the Catholic Church," Kissling told Salon.com on Feb. 13. "Well-deserved criticism, in my opinion. But it feeds very nicely into the Donohue agenda, which is to cast everything that is critical of positions taken by the Catholic Church as anti-Catholicism."

It's an agenda that she made a career out of opposing. One of her first statements as CFFC president was to point out that committed Catholics have differing opin-

ions about abortion. More recently, when conservative Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was named pope, CFFC launched Pope-Watch.org to monitor his actions and spark dialogue, not overthrow the papacy.

Kissling has deep roots in both the Catholic Church and the pro-choice movement. At the age of 19 she became a nun, but left the convent after six months. She went on to help found the National Abortion Federation and run one of the very first legal abortion clinics in New York. In 1982, she assumed leadership of Catholics for a Free Choice, a perfect match for the organization that positions itself at the intersection of feminism, Catholicism and civil liberties.

Anti-choice and fundamentalist Christian groups have long portrayed Kissling as a puppet of the secular pro-choice movement, claiming she uses her faith to win over more moderate Christians. And indeed, a recent tribute to her at the Four Seasons Hotel in Washington featured a Who's Who of the pro-choice movement—Gloria Steinem, former NARAL president Kate Michelman and the Feminist Majority's Eleanor Smeal. There were many quips about religion, but no prayers.

"What Frances did was keep us grounded and honest by challenging the status quo," Michelman says, describing how Kissling always played the role of the "anti-slogan-er" in coalition meetings. "She never accepted the expected way of addressing the challenges we faced."

Under her direction, Catholics for a Free Choice not only sought to challenge the Catholic Church, but to reform the abortion debate in the United States. Consistently referred to as the "philosopher of the pro-choice movement," Kissling was one of the first abortion-rights leaders to encourage discussion about the status of fetal life. Her 2004 essay "Is There Life After Roe?: How to Think About the Fetus," published in CFFC's *Conscience* magazine, is often quoted by anti-choice groups seeking to prove that abortion is a morally ambiguous choice.

At the time, the Republican-controlled Congress was considering and passing bills to expand fetal rights, and pro-choice groups were more reluctant than ever to tackle the subject. Unafraid of criticism, she wrote, "The prochoice

movement will be far more trusted if it openly acknowledges that the abortion decision involves weighing multiple values and that one of those values is fetal life."

As writer and self-described Catholic girl Anna Quindlen remarked in her tribute to Kissling, "It's important to speak truth to the power of your opponents, but it's more important to speak truth to the power of your friends."

Kissling will likely continue to do so. In September, she will begin a fellowship at the Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Studies, where her challenging thinking on pro-choice politics will continue to inform—and agitate—the movement. As her successor, Jon O'Brien, who has worked with Kissling at CFFC for the past decade, bluntly put it at the event: "Someone at this tribute just had to say it. Frances Kissling is a pain in the --."

Those are kind words to Kissling's ears. "If I wasn't such a pain in the ass," she says, "no one would pay attention to me." ■

ANN FRIEDMAN is associate web editor of the American Prospect and an editor of *Feministing.com*.

Cheney and Libby: Lying about Lying

HERE IS THE real news from the I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby trial: Evidence released during the case indicates that not only did Libby lie to the grand jury (the crime for which he was convicted) but that the Office of the Vice President (OVP)—specifically Vice President Dick Cheney, Libby and Cathie Martin, Cheney's press secretary—tried to cover-up the Bush administration's original lies to Congress and the American people about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction with more lies.

This second round of lies began after Joseph Wilson published a July 6, 2003 op-ed in the *New York Times*, in which he said that his 2002 fact-finding mission found no evidence that Saddam Hussein had bought yellowcake uranium from Niger. Recall that President George W. Bush in his 2003 State of the Union (SOTU) address used this story about Niger yellowcake as proof that Saddam was trying to develop a nuclear arsenal.

One piece of evidence introduced at the

trial was a Jan. 24, 2003 CIA document—a document that Martin, in a note submitted at the trial, described as a "restatement" of the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) claim that Saddam was trying to acquire uranium. Faced in the summer of 2003 with accusations from Wilson and journalists that OVP had knowingly put erroneous uranium claims in President Bush's 2003 SOTU address, OVP tried to declassify the NIE and the Jan. 24 restatement. By declassifying both, OVP hoped to prove that the CIA supported the Niger claim in October 2002—and still supported it in January 2003, when it formed the basis for the "16 words" Bush uttered in the SOTU.

This was patently untrue, but that didn't stop Libby and Cheney from attempting to make this argument several times. The two men tried unsuccessfully to have the NIE restatement included in then-CIA director George Tenet's July 11, 2003 public acknowledgement of responsibility for the false uranium claim in the SOTU. They included it in a talking points memo drafted in response to Tenet's statement. And, using Paul Wolfowitz as the leak, they released it to the press.

Urban MEDITATIONS

By Kip Tiernan and Fran Froehlich

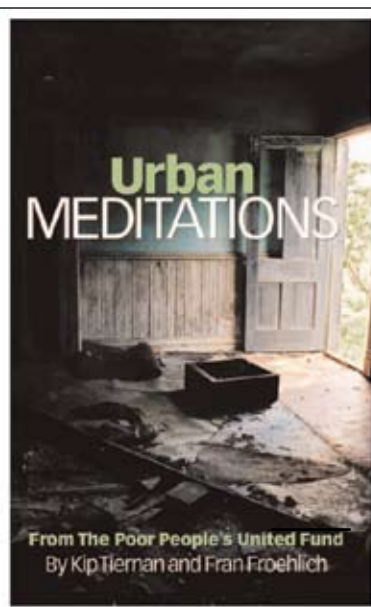
From the founders of Rosie's Place, Community Works, and the Greater Boston Food Bank

"Urban Meditations are illuminated manuscripts for these Dark Ages. This is 'religion' brought back to the dirty streets that humanity's greatest prophets have walked side by side with the 'least' of us. These meditations light a better way through a period of our history when words like 'truth,' 'democracy,' and yes—even 'Jesus'—have been hijacked."

Michael Patrick MacDonald, author of *All Souls: A Family Story from Southie* and his new book *Easter Rising — An Irish American Coming Up from Under*

"Kip Tiernan writes from the margins of power. These meditations hold up the prophet's dangerous weapon—a mirror. They offer, too, hope: a vision of a new earth where all are at the table. This is outcast theology from a wisdom teacher. Now 80, Kippy is still flipping over the money tables where we left our hearts. She invites us, too, to do some upsetting of the imperial furniture that keeps us comfortable."

Renny Golden, author of *War on Families — Impri-soned Mothers and the Children They Leave Behind* and co-author *Oscar Romero, His Life and Writings*



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itt—jan07

In the weeks after 9/11, legislators and the mainstream media began obsessing about homeland security. "It was pretty obvious where things were headed," says Sean Marquis. So, in response to what Marquis says was a bipartisan uber-patriotism that resulted in the "the concession of civil liberties for a false sense of security," he developed **Feel Safe, the Game of Homeland Security**, while holding down his day job at a grocery store.

A board game whose winner is the first to lose all 10 of the liberties detailed in the Bill of Rights, **Feel Safe** plays like the "Daily Show" answer to Monopoly. The game, satirizing some of our government's darkest moments, forces players to confront life in a police-state while they navigate an Orwellian landscape of Terror Alerts, mind-numbing media, Homeland Security Field Offices and Incriminating Dossiers. Directional cards place the player in situations that require snitching on suspicious citizens, from the foreign-born cab driver who agrees with the UN's condemnation of Guantánamo Bay to the people who buy "Arabica Bean" coffee. The first player to torch all their rights in the "Bill of Rights Bonfire" wins.

To order Feel Safe, visit www.feelsafethegame.com. One has the option of the basic \$13.50 version of the game, or the deluxe version for \$21. Interested parties may also send a check (plus \$4.25 shipping and handling) to Patriot Games, PO Box 7532, Asheville, NC, 28802.

—Anna Grace Schneider



This copy of Joseph Wilson's *New York Times* op-ed, marked by Vice President Dick Cheney, was introduced into evidence at the Libby trial.

On July 17, 2003, a *Wall Street Journal* editorial proclaimed: "Regarding the supposedly discredited Niger story, the NIE says that 'a foreign government service reported that as of early 2001 Niger planned to send several tons of "pure uranium" (probably yellowcake) to Iraq.'" The *Journal* editorial then asserted that the same information was used—via the Jan. 24 document—in preparation for the State of the Union: "But we are told that language identical to what was in the NIE is what the CIA presented to the White House last January 24 in preparation for President Bush's State of the Union address."

This last bit is key: Every time OVP raised the Jan. 24 document in their talking points during that frantic week of damage control in July 2003, they claimed the document was used in preparation for the State of the Union. In fact, however, the document was submitted to the White House *after* the CIA had already removed references to Niger from the SOTU.

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Report on Iraq states that the NIE document was submitted to the White House to use in preparation of Colin Powell's Feb. 5, 2003, speech to the United Nations, not the SOTU. The cover sheet on the document itself bears this out—it was faxed to the White House Situation Room for the Saturday work session on Powell's speech, and it was faxed to (among others) Libby, who claims not to have worked on that part of the SOTU.

There's one other detail revealed by the OVP talking points memo introduced at the trial. The OVP used the Jan. 24 document to counter a July 23 explanation by Tenet and Condoleezza Rice that Alan

Foley, then-head of the CIA's Weapons, Intelligence, Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Center, forced Bob Joseph, a staffer at the National Security Council, to remove some details from the SOTU. Foley testified before the Senate that one of those details was the word "Niger."

But the OVP's talking points memo reveals that Foley made Joseph remove the word Niger before the Jan. 24 document was created. The memo states:

Director Tenet's statement cites an oral conversation between CIA [Foley] and NSC staffers [Joseph] shortly before the State of the Union, but not the equally or more authoritative Jan. 24 submission that was sent by the CIA officer responsible for the NIE, that reached some or all of these same NSC staffers within two days of the oral discussion and that reaffirmed the Intelligence Community's conclusions in the NIE.

The conversation in which Foley instructed Joseph to remove the word Niger occurred two days before the Jan. 24 document was created! The CIA told Joseph not to include Niger in the SOTU, and a day or so later, someone at the White House requested—and Libby and Joseph received—that section of the NIE that supported the uranium claim.

Not only did OVP lie about what speech the Jan. 24 document pertained to—but that lie was made worse by the timing. The Niger reference had already been removed from the SOTU by the time this document was created.

In July 2003, when confronted with their lying, the administration acted indignant, responded with another lie and then tried—again—to cook the evidence.

—Marcy Wheeler

Resisting the War on Science

SOUND SCIENCE COUNTS itself as one of the many victims of the Bush administration's assault on reason, and sound science is fighting back—finally, with support from Congress. Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation held a hearing on Feb. 7 to explore allegations that the government has attempted to censor 150 climate scientists by pressuring them to delete references to “global warming” or “climate change” from scientific papers and reports, and avoid talking with the media.

One of the driving forces behind Inouye's hearing was a petition signed by more than 10,000 scientists this past December, decrying administration attempts to politicize science. The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) circulated that petition along with an “A to Z Guide to Political Interference in Science” that documents hundreds of instances of censorship and political interference. Signatories include 52 Nobel Laureates, 63 National Medal of Science recipients and almost 200 members of the National Academies of Science.

At the same time it has gagged scientists who warned of climate change, the Bush administration has amplified voices of “experts” from the oil and gas industry. Philip A. Cooney worked as a lawyer for the American Petroleum Institute before being ushered into the White House's Council on Environmental Quality. Following accusations in 2005 that he edited government reports to raise doubts about global warming and downplay the findings of mainstream scientists, Cooney left the White House for a job with ExxonMobil Corp.

Tampering with science didn't begin with Bush. Under the leadership of Newt Gingrich, in 1995 the Republican-controlled Congress withdrew funding for the Office of Technology Assessment, which since 1972 had provided reliable scientific counsel.

Before that, the work of NASA scientist, and one of the first whistleblowers about global warming, James Hansen was censored by the first Bush administration. Last year Hansen accused NASA administrators of trying to influence his public statements about the causes of climate change.

“The scientist statement makes clear that while science is rarely the only factor in public policy decisions, this input should be objective and impartial,” says Francesca Grifo, the director of the UCS's Scientific Integrity Program. “Sustained protest from scientists, individual Republicans and Democrats in Congress, and the nation's leading editorial pages has not been enough to make the abuse of science stop.”

The UCS presented its “A to Z Guide” in the form of a mock Periodic Table of Elements with a different color to represent each subject. The violations of scientific integrity date back to 2002, and range from “Abstinence Only Sex Education Science” to “Ground Zero,” from “Arms Control Advisory Panel” to “School Vouchers.”

Some issues are more political than scientific—like the Department of Justice's suppression of a racial profiling study in August 2005—while others focus on issues of health and safety. The guide reports that in October 2002 “nominees selected by the staff of scientists” were rejected from the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Panel and replaced by appointees “with financial ties to the lead industry.”

But the meat of the guide is the section on the environment. For example, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) scientists criticized a 2004 EPA report that found hydraulic fracturing (“literally pumping water or another fluid into rock under such high pressure that it creates new cracks around an oil reservoir”) when drilling for oil “poses little or no threat” to drinking water, even in the midst of aquifers. However the Bush administration and its oil allies supported hydraulic fracturing, so the EPA scientists were overruled.

“From airborne bacteria to Ground Zero, science continues to be misrepresented for political gain,” says Grifo. “The new Congress should enact meaningful reforms so decisions within federal scientific agencies and advisory committees are based on objective and unbiased science.”

The UCS continues to gather signatures from scientists and laymen alike. The group's Web site, www.ucsusa.org, provides an online form through which scientists can add their name to the list. Non-scientists can sign a separate statement of civilian concern.

—Jacob Wheeler

Rethinking Lineups

IN THE MID-'90S, inspired by a spate of DNA exonerations, academics began to study whether eyewitness identifications using traditional police lineups were less reliable than previously believed and found that a different lineup protocol appeared to be more dependable.

So Sheri Mecklenburg, general counsel to the Chicago Police Department, and Ebbe Ebbesen, a psychology professor at the University of California at San Diego, decided to test it. Their one year



In this 1985 Texas lineup, the perpetrator was described as a black male, but only one black man was included in the lineup.

field study, conducted in three different-sized Illinois cities—Chicago, Evanston and Joliet—was Mecklenburg's idea. As counsel to the police department, she says, “I want them to do the best job they can, and they want to do the best job they can. I'm not against any improvement.”

However, the Illinois results appear to prove that the old method produces more correct identifications than the new. Mecklenburg and Ebbesen went straight to the press—but withheld their methodology, usually a point of pride for any academic inquiry.

The research Mecklenburg and Ebbesen tested had been done by Gary Wells, a psychology professor at Iowa State University, who began studying eyewitness reliability more than 30 years ago and has published more than 100 studies. His laboratory studies found that a new lineup method called “sequential double-blind,” in which witnesses are shown suspects one by one by an administrator who does not know who the “real” suspect is, is more reliable

than the traditional “simultaneous, non-blind” protocol, in which the lead detective shows eyewitnesses a row of people with one true suspect.

Wells was not consulted for the Illinois study and expresses concern about its results. In laboratory studies involving multiple variables, every variation is tested separately so that the researcher can be sure which variable causes which result. “The whole idea behind using double-blind procedures, whether it’s simultaneous or sequential, is that [in the old protocol] a non-blind administrator is influencing the test,” Wells says.

When the results of the field test were published, the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NACDL) and the MacArthur Justice Center asked Mecklenburg and Ebbesen to disclose their methodology. After failing to get responses after nearly a year, both groups filed Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests on Feb. 8, demanding documentation of the field test’s methodology.

“Because they are refusing to share their statistics, it makes you think there is something they don’t want to show,” says Martin Pinales, president of the NACDL.

According to Locke Bowman, author of the FOIA request, Mecklenburg says she is withholding trial results due to concerns about privacy, but he believes easy steps could be taken to maintain confidentiality. Like Pinales, Bowman wonders if Mecklenburg has something to hide.

“It was a very surprising outcome, and what it did was to justify the status quo, [which] is one that has produced a significant number of misidentifications,” he says.

Indeed, Northwestern University’s Center on Wrongful Convictions found that, in Illinois alone, erroneous eyewitness identifications led to the wrongful convictions of 54 innocent people. Nationwide, 75 percent of the approximately 200 wrongfully convicted prisoners who have been exonerated by DNA testing had been mistakenly identified by eyewitnesses, according to researchers at Yeshiva University’s Innocence Project, a nonprofit law firm that works DNA exoneration cases for convicts who claim they are falsely imprisoned.

“What’s lost in these write ups [of the Illinois study] is that ‘suspect’ does not mean ‘guilty party,’ ” says Wells. “With the sequential double-blind lineup, you would get more picks that are accurate.

With the simultaneous double-blind, they might get more picks, but they could be the wrong picks.”

Mecklenburg was disappointed with Wells’ response. “This is an interesting, important study,” she says. “It’s got real-life data and we all need to look at it to see what it means. All of these theories and hypotheticals, you can’t make a policy based on that. I don’t know that real life can ever satisfy an academic.”

The question is not merely academic. Sometimes, eyewitnesses are trying to find criminals from lineups that contain none. According to Innocence Project Policy Analyst Rebecca Brown, every convict that the project has exonerated was identified in a lineup that did not include the true perpetrator.

“The suggestion is made in the analysis that there is less ‘incorrect’ identification in the traditional method, but that begs the question of whether that’s a police perception,” says Bowman. “What is of concern to me as a lawyer is that around the country, this study is being cited and used in the argument that traditional methods shouldn’t be changed.”

—Leah Nelson

appall-o-meter

2.2 Is That A Sword In Your Hand, Or ...

Police in a suburb of Milwaukee last month were at pains to sort out facts in the case of a vigilante swordsman. What is not disputed is that James Van Iveren, 39, of Oconomowoc, Wis., kicked down the door of his upstairs neighbor and burst into his living room brandishing a cavalry sword and yelling, “Where is she? Where is she?”

According to the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, Van Iveren later told police that he had heard sounds coming from the upstairs apartment that he believed were a woman’s cries for help. He had no phone with which to call the police, he explained, so he grabbed the sword and embarked on a rescue mission.

Van Iveren’s neighbor presented a somewhat different version of events. According to Brett Stieghorst, 33, what Van Iveren likely heard coming from his apartment was the soundtrack of *Casa de Culo*, the pornographic DVD he’d been watching. Stieghorst assured reporters that the DVD did not depict rape or anything else that might suggest female distress,

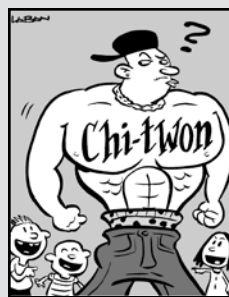
although he seemed to admit that, beyond some very broad themes, he wasn’t sure what *Casa de Culo* was about. “It’s all in Spanish, and I don’t understand a word of it,” he told the *Journal-Sentinel*. “I only bought it for the hot chicks.”

Police have charged Van Iveren, and Stieghorst has said he’s thinking about buying headphones.

2.3 Tears of a Clonw

Here’s some friendly advice from a copyeditor to all you gangstas and would-be G’s out there who favor the distinctive all-capitals gothic script known as thug font: Always — always! — proof-read your tattoos before you get them inked. How many tragic mistakes have to happen before the skin-art community recognizes that M’s and N’s and W’s look alike in thug font (especially when the letters are next to each other)?

One mishap has led to litigation. Michael Duplessis, 40, a Chicago mechanic, is suing Jade Dragon Tattoo & Body Piercing for a typo that has caused him



“emotional distress from public ridicule.” Two years ago, Duplessis paid the shop to emblazon “CHI-TOWN” on his chest, a manly tribute to his hard-as-nails home. Only later did he discover, to his horror, that his tat read “CHI-TONW.”

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Duplessis’ suit claims that correcting the error caused him “a loss of

self-esteem and psychological pain,” adding that he “will continue to be injured and disfigured and to suffer in the future.”

4.4 Nearer, My Lord, to Thee

After lightening the U.S. Treasury’s load by an estimated \$25 billion in the effort to liberate Iraq, the unloved oil and defense contractor Halliburton has announced its impending, tearful departure from its native shores. According to ABC, its new corporate headquarters will move from Houston to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

—Dave Mulcahey

Uncle Sam Wants Sustainability

IN JANUARY, *CONSCIOUS Choice*, a Chicago urban lifestyle magazine released “The Chicago Green Report Card.” Examining Mayor Richard J. Daley’s commitment to a cleaner Chicago, it evaluated the city’s environmental progress and issued grades in 11 key areas—such as making Chicago the organic food capital of the Midwest, cleaning up the Chicago River and creating a world-class mass transit system. *Conscious Choice* editor in chief Charles Shaw coordinated the project, working closely with the city’s Department of the Environment.

Enter Major John J. Fittipaldi, a senior fellow at Army Environmental Policy Institute in Arlington, Va. On Jan. 29, Fittipaldi contacted Shaw. He said the Army was intrigued by *Conscious Choice*’s 11-category grading system. Recognizing that the system might not apply directly to U.S. military installations, Fittipaldi wondered if the methodology could be adapted to easily and clearly evaluate the Army’s progress toward its sustainability goals.

Shaw, however, refused to help, telling Fittipaldi that his methodology was “classified.” But he did offer five suggestions that would “surely guarantee” the sustainability of our armed forces. Shaw called for the United States to: End the use of fossil fuels; withdraw our armed presence from, among other locations, the Middle East and central Asia; stop the use of depleted uranium shells; dismantle the nuclear arsenal; and stop using humvees. Those measures, he believes, will go further toward sustaining the armed forces than the construction of a few green roofs or solar panels on military bases.

“I was trying to show them the hypocrisy of using the word sustainable,” he says. “Why would I want to make the army a more efficient, sustainable killing machine?”

Shaw’s concerns have merit. The U.S. military is the largest purchaser of oil in the world. In peacetime, the U.S. armed forces consume 100 million barrels a year—about the same as Greece. And that figure jumps at least 27 percent during wartime. Uranium 238, which is depleted and used in U.S. armor-piercing rounds and Phalanx missiles, has a half-life of 4.5 billion years—it stays in the human body almost indefinitely. Once absorbed, uranium’s

snapshot



WUHAN, CHINA—A student stands at the entrance of the Lingzhi Primary School, a private school for migrant children. A recent survey by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security found that delinquent back-pay, low wages and difficulties in sending their children to school are key concerns among the millions of migrant workers in the country. (Photo by China Photos/Getty Images)

radioactivity can lead to cancer or kidney damage, among other health effects (See “What We Leave Behind,” December 2006). According to the most conservative estimates, U.S. and British forces have left 400,000 pounds of depleted uranium in Iraq since the start of the invasion.

Still, some of Shaw’s colleagues feel he missed a valuable opportunity. Alex Steffen, executive editor of the progressive blog *WorldChanging.com*, can understand why Shaw took his stance, but argues that the military is here to stay.

“Even if we substantially demilitarize—as would be my hope—many will still believe we need a substantial military capable of projecting force around the world,” he says. “Given that reality, I think it is incumbent on us to do everything we can to make the military’s operations as sustainable as possible and its strategy as supportive of positive change as possible.”

Steffen isn’t alone. While most were supportive, some felt Shaw turned this opportunity into a zero-sum game—comprehensive environmental reform, or none at all. And one question surfaced repeatedly: Why shouldn’t we help the military crawl toward sustainability?

The U.S. military is trying to improve its energy efficiency. The Army’s pollution-prevention program, P2, states that when “timely and cost-effective,” limiting emissions and waste is the preferred approach. Quantum Technologies, an alternative-energy firm which is developing fuel-cell technology for General Motors and Ford, has an Army contract to develop mobile hydrogen refueling stations. And, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, acting Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England wrote a memo to U.S. military leaders emphasizing the need for fuel conservation.

Yet despite such moves, the United States still refuses to sign onto the Kyoto Protocol. The Pentagon is resisting pressure to clean up current and former U.S. military bases where buried munitions, fuel spills and other waste contaminate the soil and water.

Ultimately, Shaw feels that the military and, by extension, the U.S. government is merely trying to avoid liability and culpability. “They see that green is sexy and cool and that people don’t like oil corporations right now,” Shaw says. “They think they can dress themselves up with it.”

—Michael Burgner

BY SUSAN J. DOUGLAS

Why Does CNN Suck?



AS THE NEWS media struggle to find equilibrium in an era of increased competition and decreased trust, we have some lessons that defy current conventional wisdom. The most important is that newspapers—yes, old, print-based, non-digital, non-instantaneous, so-1950s newspapers—still matter enormously. The other is that the outlet best equipped to provide instant 24-7 news, the cable channel—and CNN in particu-

lar—has become a massive failure, especially under the control of Time-Warner.

Does CNN really have no shame anymore? The day that Britney Spears shaved her head, the story seemed to be in a 6-minute rotation, lest inquiring minds somehow missed this irrelevant flotsam. The following day it was still a top story, CNN reminding us that her head was, yes, indeed still shaved, as if an application of Rogaine and Chem-lawn might have sprouted it back overnight.

Another minor scandal is how much attention CNN paid to the Anna Nicole Smith melodrama, bombarding us with Anna Nicole experts—how *does* one become an Anna Nicole expert?—while relishing the repeated use of the word “decomposing.” The Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) has begun a news index on its Web site that monitors, in part, how the cable channels fill their news hole: The week of Feb. 4, when debates about U.S. policy in Iraq were 12 percent of the news hole, Anna Nicole filled 10 percent of it. Explained Wolf Blitzer, “That’s the only story we reported for two solid hours ... we just couldn’t help ourselves.” By contrast, Anna Nicole was not in the top five stories covered in PEJ’s sample of newspapers. The following week, Anna Nicole continued to dominate the cable talk shows, with the likes of the ever-shrill Nancy Grace gnawing this bone of a story to its meatless end. Is it any wonder that public confidence in the news media continues to decline?

Almost every night, Jon Stewart makes fun of the cable channels, especially CNN. The network was reportedly bombarded by complaints about the wall-to-wall, breast-to-breast Anna Nicole coverage. But the ridicule and complaints seem not to matter: CNN, with a few exceptions here and there, continues down its slope of triviality, superficiality and sensationalism. On the day after the Libby verdict, CNN’s lead story at 9 a.m. was about the Mega Millions Lottery and who might win it. This was followed by advice on how to program

your TiVo with your cell phone (hello?), and whether to take an aspirin a day or not. I never thought I’d say anything longing about Ted Turner, but CNN had more integrity when it was his baby.

Meanwhile, amidst all the hand-wringing about the death of newspapers, the *Washington Post*’s exposé of conditions at Walter Reed Hospital became a major story with legs. The independent press (including blogs) have been reporting about the medical neglect of returning soldiers for years, but the *Post*’s focus on the alleged gold standard of military hospitals and its sordid details about mouse droppings and “belly up cockroaches” showed that good old fashioned investigative journalism matters. And while post-mortems on the Libby case emphasized the toll it took on the press (not to be underestimated), few emphasized that it was *The*

New York Times’ gutsy publication of Joe Wilson’s op-ed piece that, in fact, ignited this disastrous abuse of power.

The underlying issue here, as Bob McChesney and his organization Free Press note, is that the commercial business model

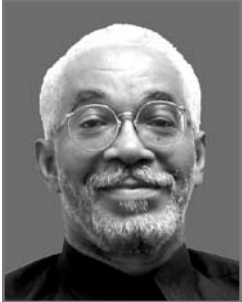
CNN was bombarded by complaints about its wall-to-wall, breast-to-breast Anna Nicole Smith coverage, but the ridicule seems not to matter.

of news organizations demands one thing: the highest possible profits and return on investment. Paula Zahn and others on CNN justified their Anna Nicole glut by saying that ratings had increased (despite survey results in which 71 percent said they were not interested in the story.) Wall Street, which is constantly anthropomorphized into some all-knowing Buddha, currently doesn’t “like” newspapers because their profit margins are no longer between 22 and 29 percent, an outrageously high expectation especially when compared to many other businesses. When proposals are floated to reduce expectations on profit margins back to, say, 10 percent, critics note that Wall Street would revolt, hostile takeovers by non-news types would flourish, and the news would be further destroyed. But can it get any worse?

It is of course a time of flux for the news industry as more people go to the Internet for their news and industry types try to figure out how to profit from that. (The increasingly intrusive ads suggest they’ve made plenty of progress in this area). But with a severely damaged presidency, an oppositional Congress, and a backlog of scandalous underreported stories—from the down-and-dirty about shoddy mortgage practices to the real conditions on the ground in Iraq for U.S. military and Iraqi civilians alike—this could be a great moment for the news media. But if they kowtow too much to the corporate suits, they will further lose their core audience, the one that sustains not only them, but also the ever-tenuous connection between journalism and democracy. ■

BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

Slavery and the State of Denial



ON FEB. 24, Virginia's state assembly voted unanimously to express "profound regret" for the state's role in slavery. Legislators assembled in the former capital of the Confederacy to express regret for sanctioning "the most horrendous of all depredations of human rights and violations of our founding ideals in our nation's history." The action could mark a significant shift in public opinion.

Virginia has become the nation's first state to step away from the state of denial.

The last such effort was in 2000, when former Rep. Tony Hall (D-Ohio) proposed a similar bill in Congress. Hall was repeating a failed effort mounted in 1997. Both efforts were greeted with derision and the legislation died an ignoble death.

The action of Virginia's legislators comes as the state is celebrating the 400th anniversary of Jamestown, where the first enslaved Africans arrived in 1619. The resolution has sparked discussion about similar bills in Maryland, Missouri and Georgia. In Congress, Rep. Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.) has introduced a resolution apologizing to African-Americans for "the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality and inhumanity of slavery and Jim Crow." Cohen is a freshman who represents a predominantly black district in Memphis.

Virginia's action also comes at a time when the country is engrossed in other discussions about slavery. One day after the state's apology, a genealogical group released a finding that Coleman Sharpton, the great-grandfather of the civil rights activist Rev. Al Sharpton, was owned by the forebears of the late segregationist Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.). This connection, reported in the *New York Daily News*, shocked Sharpton. "I couldn't describe to you the emotions I have had ... everything from anger to outrage to reflection to some pride and glory," he said at a press conference. "You think about the distance that you've come, you think about how brutal it was, you think about how life must have been life for him. And then you start wondering whether or not he would be proud or disappointed in what we have done."

Sharpton was disturbed by the specificity of the knowledge, which made slavery less abstract and more personal. For most Americans, slavery is a vague historical abstraction, distanced and obscured by a veil of cultural denial.

Guilt is the primary reason white Americans prefer to look away from the abomination of race-based slavery that

laid the foundation for this nation's wealth and implanted enduring notions of white supremacy. Some African-Americans have been shamed into denial as well, but many desperately seek links to their lost heritage.

Slavery's historical significance was further underlined by disclosures that presidential candidate, Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), the Hawaiian-born son of a white woman from Kansas and a black man from Kenya, is descended from slave owners. His great-great-great-great grandfather George Washington Overall owned a 15-year-old girl and a 25-year-old man, according to the 1850 census in Nelson County, Ky.

An Obama spokesman said, "It is a true measure of progress that the descendant of a slave owner would come to marry a student from Kenya and produce a son who would grow up to be a candidate for president of the United States."

It is progress indeed. But the measurement is mostly symbolic. Obama may physically embody racial reconciliation, but the society in which he moves has yet to reconcile disparate racial realities. Peruse

the statistics of social well-being and you'll find glaring discrepancies between white and black Americans.

One of the reasons for these enduring disparities is a lack of governmental attention to slavery's lengthening legacy. Because of our tendency to deny unflattering history, most Americans know very little of slavery's enormous, multi-generational impact. The current media prominence of slavery stories helps dispel some of that ignorance. Attempts by lawmakers to admit governmental culpability for the outrage of slavery also go a long way in educating Americans about this tarnished past.

With apologies and mea culpa in the air, it would seem a propitious time to re-introduce H.R. 40, Rep. John Conyers' (D-Mich.) bill to appoint a commission to analyze the effects of slavery. Since 1989, Conyers, who is now the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, has introduced H.R. 40 in every Congress. And in every Congress it has lain dormant. The legislation instructs the commission to review whether "any form of compensation to the descendants of African slaves is warranted."

Cohen's resolution is more explicit than Conyers' and calls for a "commitment to rectify the lingering consequences of the misdeeds committed against African-Americans under slavery and Jim Crow." His bill, which already has 50 co-sponsors, opens the way for a serious discussion about reparations for the legacy of slavery and a permanent exit from the state of denial. ■

Guilt is the primary reason white Americans refuse to confront the race-based slavery that laid the foundation for this nation's wealth.

BY H. CANDACE GORMAN

Reading Harry Potter in Guantánamo



THE PRISONERS AT Guantánamo Bay—or Azkaban, as one of my clients, a Harry Potter fan, calls it—have had no access to a hearing in a court of law. Instead, Guantánamo’s inmates are subjected to two kangaroo procedures: Combatant Status Review Tribunals (CSRTs) and Administrative Review Boards (ARBs).

The CSRTs are the tribunals that determine whether an individual is an “enemy combatant.” Needless to say, the cards are stacked against the prisoner from the get-go. The tribunals are allowed to rely on hearsay evidence and information acquired through coercion. Any evidence deemed “secret” is withheld from the prisoner. Can you imagine trying to defend yourself against evidence kept secret from you?

Amazingly, my client Abdul Al-Ghizzawi (a Libyan national who ran a bakery in Jalalabad, Afghanistan before being handed to the Americans for a bounty in late 2001), was found by the CSRT to have no ties to terrorism and *not to be* an enemy combatant. Unfortunately, the higher-ups intervened and the tribunal’s judgment was overturned six weeks later upon the miraculous discovery of “new evidence.” I saw the classified proceedings of my client’s tribunals, and I can assure you that no new material was considered. Mark and Joshua Denbeaux, authors of the study “No-Hearing Hearings,” have discovered that some prisoners went through as many as three CSRTs before the tribunals made the “correct” determination that a prisoner had ties to terrorism.

The second procedure in this Kafkaesque process, the ARB, is an annual (and usually meaningless) ritual in which the military assesses an enemy combatant’s status. In several now-infamous cases, the ARB darkly noted that the prisoner owned a Casio wristwatch (which could conceivably be used to time explosives). At one such hearing, the prisoner in question noted that American military personnel also wear Casio watches and sardonically asked if they too were terrorists. Similarly, karate skills, knowledge of computers and participation in the pilgrimage to Mecca have also been considered factors supporting “continuing detention.” When the ARB recommends the release of an individual, there is never an apology or an acknowledgment that a mistake has been made. In order to save face (and thwart possible lawsuits), the U.S. government insists that a release “does not equate to innocence.”

Last year I was invited to submit a letter on behalf of Al-Ghizzawi to the ARBs. The government did everything possible to prevent me from meeting and communicating with my client and yet, in a phony gesture, they invited me to advocate for this man who at the time I had never met.

I have now met with Al-Ghizzawi several times and I know him to be heartsick for his family, physically ill and completely innocent. I will make the details of his capture by bounty hunters and his appalling treatment by negligent U.S. officials clear to the review board. Still, I know the procedure is meaningless. On Feb. 22 the government informed lawyers that some Guantánamo prisoners have been eligible for release for two years, but have been held back by bureaucratic and diplomatic impasses.

I am also expected to make an ARB submission for my

Ali sees parallels between George W. Bush and J.K. Rowling’s arch-villain, Voldemort. Guantánamo is the real-world equivalent of Azkaban.

second client, Razak Ali, a 36-year-old Algerian, and I find myself in the same place I was last year with Al-Ghizzawi. I know virtually nothing about him because the government has fought to prevent me from receiving any paper-

work regarding his detention. The court finally allowed me to meet with Razak Ali in November and have him sign a representation form (making me officially his lawyer). Not wanting to jeopardize this all-important meeting, I decided against talking to my client about his detention. I kept our conversation light. We spent a long time discussing the Harry Potter books, his favorite books at the Guantánamo library.

Ali sees parallels between George W. Bush and J.K. Rowling’s arch-villain, Voldemort. Guantánamo is the real-world equivalent of Azkaban, the cheerless prison guarded by the soulless “tormentors.” It seems almost natural that fact and fantasy collide in Guantánamo, the prison camp dreamed up by the Bush administration lawyers. Checks and balances, constitutional protections and longstanding legal traditions all dissolve before their fanciful “unitary executive theory.” I submitted my ARB response for Ali on Feb. 23, and I did not mention his comparison of Bush to Voldemort. The government would probably conclude that it only proved he was an enemy of the state. Instead, I asked a basic question: “How can I be expected to make a submission regarding Ali when the government refuses to provide any information about the reasons for his detention?” I don’t expect an answer. ■

H. CANDACE GORMAN is a civil rights attorney in Chicago. Adrian Bleifuss Prados, her law clerk, contributed to this column.

BY LAURA S. WASHINGTON

The United States of Amnesia



IN AMERICA, HISTORIANS are rarely heard from and seldom honored. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. was an exception to this rule. When he died on Feb. 28 at the age of 89, his historiography was praised and his person exulted in mass media and academic circles. His honors were manifold: the Pulitzer Prize, National Book Award and the Bancroft Prize, among others. He was a consummate public intellectual before the coin was termed. His

liberalism was eclipsed only by his ego.

Schlesinger's trademark bow tie and coke-bottle spectacles strongly identified him in the public mind as a classic egghead. Alonzo L. Hamby, a distinguished professor of history at Ohio University, wrote in an obit for the History News Network, "Students of the historical profession may think of [Schlesinger] as the most prominent of a small group of scholars who kept the old Charles A. Beard-Vernon Parrington 'progressive' interpretation of American history alive against the onslaught of 'consensus history.'"

Our historians, like Schlesinger, are a precious link to our tenuous past. They construct a narrative that permits us to hold on to an ethereal present.

History is the glue that binds us. If there is anything that aggravates the bleep out of me, it is America's utter failure to recognize and reflect on our forebears. Looking back at what has worked, and what hasn't, in our past can illuminate possibilities for our future.

Take the American civil rights movement. The nexus of that movement revolved around the concept of non-violent civil disobedience. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. studied, then borrowed Mahatma Gandhi's concept and adapted it to an American context. King reached back into history to plumb its lessons in ways that changed the world. Without that crucial insight, the movement would have failed.

It was a cross-cultural, transnational pollination of ideas that moved the zeitgeist.

Such lessons are not written on granite tablets; literal applications would be specious. Historians are the ones who can separate the wheat from the chaff in the winnowing of history.

Remember how extraordinarily bogus the "domino theory" of communist domination turned out to be. If one nation goes Communist, the rest are soon to follow, they said. History proved differently. Yet the Bush administra-

tion promptly turned around and applied the same discredited concept to its Iraq War rationale. Topple Saddam Hussein, they said, replace him with a democratically elected regime, and democracy will sprout in the Middle East. Yes, just like turnips in Uncle Remus's briar patch. Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.) was probably the only sucker who swallowed that whale of a lie.

History tells the tale. Divide and conquer in Chicago. For most of the last half century, a political dynasty has retained and exploited power by simple division. In 1955 Richard J. "Boss" Daley won control of the Windy City by consolidating his power among white ethnics and buying off the city's budding black political class.

Harold Washington briefly wrested the city away from the Daley Machine in the '80s, but his sudden death in 1987

buried his progressive coalition, which was quickly co-opted by Richard II. Chicago has been a majority-minority town since 1990. Yet Richard M. Daley, a conservative Democrat and buddy of George W. Bush, has carved out winning

majorities from white ethnic, Latino and black votes, leaving progressives in the dust. Last month Daley won his sixth consecutive term.

Progressives in Chicago are still flunking the history test.

Historians tell us that, in America, independent presidential candidates can generate a lot of heat and some unintended consequences. In 1992 the Texas businessman Ross Perot stepped into the slugfest between Republican incumbent George H. W. Bush and his challenger, Bill Clinton. Perot's conservative pitch helped throw the election to Clinton.

Ralph Nader is a national pariah, at least among Democrats who believe that his independent foray in the 2000 presidential contest insured George W. Bush's "win" over Al Gore.

History shows us that anything is possible, but be wary of anyone who flirts with an independent run in 2008. There are stirrings out of New York City that billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg is contemplating a self-financed run as a moderate independent.

Maybe our celebrity-obsessed culture refuses to place historians on a pedestal, but that doesn't mean we can't honor them.

My favorite historian is also the founder of my favorite magazine. Jim Weinstein founded *In These Times* 30 years ago. He ensured that these pages would honor history as a tool for a dynamic Left. That's a history lesson worth memorizing. ■

Historians are the ones who can separate the wheat from the chaff in the winnowing of history.

THE FIRST STONE

BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

Global Warming: Dim Bulbs, Bright Lights



PEOPLE WHO WANT to save the Earth from the ravages of global warming face a perennial problem: How do they translate their concerns into actions that will create real change?

One barrier standing in the way of meaningful action is fuzzy-headed thinking on the part of those truly concerned about global warming. So worried are these activists, that their solution to the climate change problem is to marshal legions of Americans to change light bulbs, buy a Prius, or do any other number of helpful, but, in the big picture, not too significant feel-good actions.

For a full accounting of such a list go to the Alliance for Climate Protection Web site (www.allianceforclimateprotection.org), the nonprofit organization chaired by Al Gore. There you will learn: "What You Can Do," or more precisely, how your "own actions can also help reduce this threat." For example, the Web site advises:

Take Personal Action: You can reduce your personal contribution to global warming and set an example for others by using less gasoline, natural gas, oil, and electricity in your daily life. ... Ask each member of your household to take responsibility for a different electricity-saving action. ...

Encourage Community Action: ... Encourage your local electric utilities to promote energy efficiency and the use of clean, renewable energy sources. ...

Influence U.S. Action: The United States needs to play a leadership role in addressing global warming, and you can help make this happen. ... Tell government officials that you want them to push industry to protect the future health of the environment by reducing carbon emissions.

These suggestions are all well and good. However, what is needed at this time of the global warming crisis is a movement that vigorously challenges the status quo, one that does more than advise citizens to "ask" members of their families to reduce energy use, or "encourage" electric utility corporations to be more efficient or, "tell" their elected representatives to "push" industry.

People, of course, should do what they can to reduce global warming. But they should never be made to think that their individual actions are the root cause of the problem or the ultimate solution.

Take the Civil Rights movement. Yes, personal reflection and individual change had its place, but can you imagine Martin Luther King telling people to "ask" their school boards to integrate the public schools, or "encourage" corporations not to discriminate, or "tell" their elected leaders to "push" legislatures in the South to do away with Jim Crow laws?

No. Political movements work when they mobilize a huge number of like-minded individuals and then use the ballot box to elect leaders who will change laws.

Somehow, this is something progressives have long failed to understand. In

the early '80s, the Freeze Movement galvanized the nation against the threat posed by the nuclear arms race, which at the time the Reagan administration was busy ratcheting up. However, because the movement was largely funded by 501(c)3 organizations that by law cannot get involved in electoral politics, the Freeze Movement concentrated on educating the public about the dangers of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) rather than mobilizing people to vote the Cold Warriors out of Congress.

Similarly today, the movement against global warming, funded as it is by 501(c)3s like Gore's outfit, appears reticent to play political hard ball.

The corporations that profit from the industrial processes that create global warming have no such compunction. They will never willingly sacrifice short-term profits for the long-term common good. And they well understand that Congress could force them to alter their behavior through a combination of legislative directives and economic incentives.

For example, Congress could require that all new vehicles sold in the United States meet minimum fuel efficiency and carbon emission standards by a set date, legislate that all new constructions projects be "green," or heav-

	CONTRIBUTIONS 2001-2006	PERCENT TO DEMOCRATS	PERCENT TO REPUBLICANS	LOBBYING 2001-2005
Agribusiness	\$159,711,080	28%	71%	\$448,002,616
Oil&Gas	\$73,036,301	19%	81%	\$282,566,199
Mining	\$14,991,593	17%	83%	\$56,032,688
Electric Utilities	\$58,240,891	32%	68%	\$458,981,375
Auto Manufacturers	\$7,633,671	33%	67%	\$177,081,511
Environmental Policy Organizations	\$5,530,261	87%	13%	\$43,105,323

CENTER FOR RESPONSIVE POLITICS



ily invest in mass transit and reconstruct the national rail network. If lawmakers took such initiatives, the United States would drastically reduce the size of its carbon footprint.

Understandably, the industries that benefit from the status quo oppose such measures. To prevent change and the costs associated with it, corporations fund think tanks, hire PR firms and pay lobbyists. They also fund the campaigns of those Representatives and Senators whose support they need to ensure no law passes that would adversely affect their industries.

As the chart at the left indicates, and as legislative history bears out, the GOP is underwritten by the industries culpable for global warming. Yet Democrats, while the favored recipients of support from environmental policy organizations, are not beyond the influence of big money.

In the House, a squabble has over about who will set the Democrats' climate change agenda. In January, Speaker Pelosi established the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming and named Rep. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), an environmentalist, as chair.

Whoops! This select committee did not sit too well with Rep. John Dingell

(D-Mich.), who chairs the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. Dingell loves the auto industry, earning the moniker "Tailpipe Johnny" in the '80s for his opposition to legislation dealing with acid rain. Another unhappy camper, Rep. Rick Boucher (D-Va.), chairs the Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality. He was concerned that the select committee might do something that would make his friends in the coal industry unhappy. According to the *Washington Post*, Boucher threatened to form an alliance with Republicans to block any legislation that Markey's committee would put forward.

Dingell, who has been in the House since 1955, and Boucher won a temporary reprieve when Pelosi gave them a deadline of June to come up with legislation to address global warming.

Don't hold your breath. According to data from the Center for Responsive Politics, since the 2000 election cycle, Dingell and Boucher have been the top Democratic recipients in the House of money from the "energy/natural resources" sector of the economy (the electric utilities, mining, and oil and gas industries), raking in \$862,000 and \$773,000 respectively.

And what can \$1,635,000 buy on Capitol Hill? Inaction.

Last year, Rep. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) introduced the Keep America Competitive Global Warming Policy Act of 2006, which sought to "establish a market-based system to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and to promote advanced energy research and technology development and deployment." In October, Udall tried to get Dingell to look at his bill, but he would have none of it. As Dingell told the *Washington Post*, "If I thought it was a good idea, I would have already done it."

Boucher has a similar commitment to do-nothingism. On Nov. 28, 2005, he spoke at the Western Business Roundtable, Summit of the West. The American Coal Council Web site reported that Boucher and Pat Michaels, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, told conference attendees "that the economic dislocation of policies such as Kyoto would ensure they would not achieve substantial greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Instead, they argued that voluntary actions with targeted incentives would accomplish more reductions and encourage the adoption of more efficient technologies." In other words, any meaningful action to address global warming was off the table.

On March 7, Boucher chaired a hearing titled, "Climate Change: Are Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Human Activities Contributing to a Warming of the Planet?" Gee, let's ponder the question—and then refer it to committee.

In the Senate, things look a little brighter with Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) replacing Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.) as head of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works—though Inhofe has promised to filibuster any global "big lie" warming legislation that gets to the floor.

In short, while Congress is now in the hands of Democrats, that shift in power does not necessarily mean that vital issues like climate change will be adequately addressed. What's needed is a movement against global warming willing to play political hardball.

Yes, bless Gore for making the inconvenient truth about climate change part of the public dialogue. But if the new movement against global warming is going to get Congress to act, it will have to do more than pose an inconvenience to the likes of Dingell, Boucher and Inhofe. It will have to work to kick the bums out. ■

THIS APRIL ... RED + BLUE GO GREEN

BY BILL MCKIBBEN

Everyone's got a metaphor, and ours was the potluck dinner. If we were going to build a climate change movement, and we didn't have any money or any organization, how could we do it? We decided to throw a party. Invite our friends. Have them invite their friends. See what happened.

And you know what? It worked. On April 14, people around the country will call for the United States to "Step It Up" and reduce carbon emissions 80 percent by 2050. This will be the largest coordinated environmental protest since Earth Day 1970 heralded the onset of a new mass consciousness about the fragility of the planet's ecosystem. This is the emergence of an actual movement against global warming, something that's been missing for the two decades we've known about this problem—a movement that, because of the nature of the problem, will need to go deeper than environmentalism has gone before. Techno-fixes only go so far with climate change; this movement will need to take on culture, lifestyle, economics. There is no guarantee it will triumph, but it's almost certain to be interesting.

LAST SUMMER, I found myself despairing. True, Hurricane Katrina had blown down the door and Al Gore had walked through it with *An Inconvenient Truth*. More people now knew about climate change than ever before. But it wasn't changing the politics of the issue. In Washington, Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.), the chair of the Subcommittee on Clean Air, Climate Change and Nuclear Safety, said global warming was a "giant hoax." In a July 2006 interview with the *Tulsa World*, he compared environmentalists with Nazis and their use of "the Big Lie."

"You say something over and over and over and over again, and people will believe it, and that's [the environmentalists'] strategy," he said. "Everything on which they based their story, in terms of the facts, has been refuted scientifically."

I had been writing and speaking about global warming since 1989, when *The End of Nature*, my first book on the subject, came out and was serialized in the *New Yorker*. But I was struck by how little those of us who cared had accomplished—Americans have continued to increase their carbon emissions about a percentage point each and every year. Meanwhile, the scientific evidence was increasingly dire, the degradation of the earth's physical systems accelerating.

In my despair, I called a couple of old friends who live near me in Vermont. "Why don't we walk up to Burlington?" I asked. "We can sit in at the federal building and get ourselves arrested, and maybe it will make a little noise in the newspaper, and at least we'll have done something." They were good friends, so they agreed to go. But one of them bothered to actually call up to the Burlington Police department, only to find out that in that mellow outpost there was no chance we'd get arrested. They'd let us sit there on the steps forever. Maybe if we set something on fire we'd

get the attention we sought—but, oh, think of the carbon emissions!

Anyway, we decided to convert our little tantrum into something a bit nobler: a march, or, better yet—a climate change pilgrimage. We'd march on the shoulder of the two-lane highway; we'd hold meetings every night on town greens; we'd camp in farmers' fields along the way.

This was enough to change the dynamics of the issue. Everyone running for Vermont's open Senate and House seats, from socialist Senate candidate Rep. Bernie Sanders to his right wing opponent, Vermont's richest man, Richie Tarrant, publicly endorsed legislation sponsored by then-Sen. James Jeffords (I-Vt.) that calls for 80 percent cuts in emissions

right. Global warming is arguably the biggest problem we now face, and almost nobody in the United States had done anything political about it.

Not because people didn't care: Everyone we asked to march said yes. It's that no one had ever asked them before. The climate change movement is peculiar. It has scientists and engineers and economists,

The climate change movement is peculiar. It has scientists and engineers and economists, all the wonderful superstructure a movement needs, but no mass mobilization to support them.

And so we started asking people if they wanted to join us. In early August, a team of Middlebury students started doing the down-and-dirty, where's-the-porta-potty type of organizing. On Aug. 31, we stepped off from Robert Frost's old writing cabin in the Green Mountains. There were 300 of us that first day. Five days and 49 miles later, when we reached Burlington, we'd grown to 1,000, an impressive turnout in the nation's second smallest state.

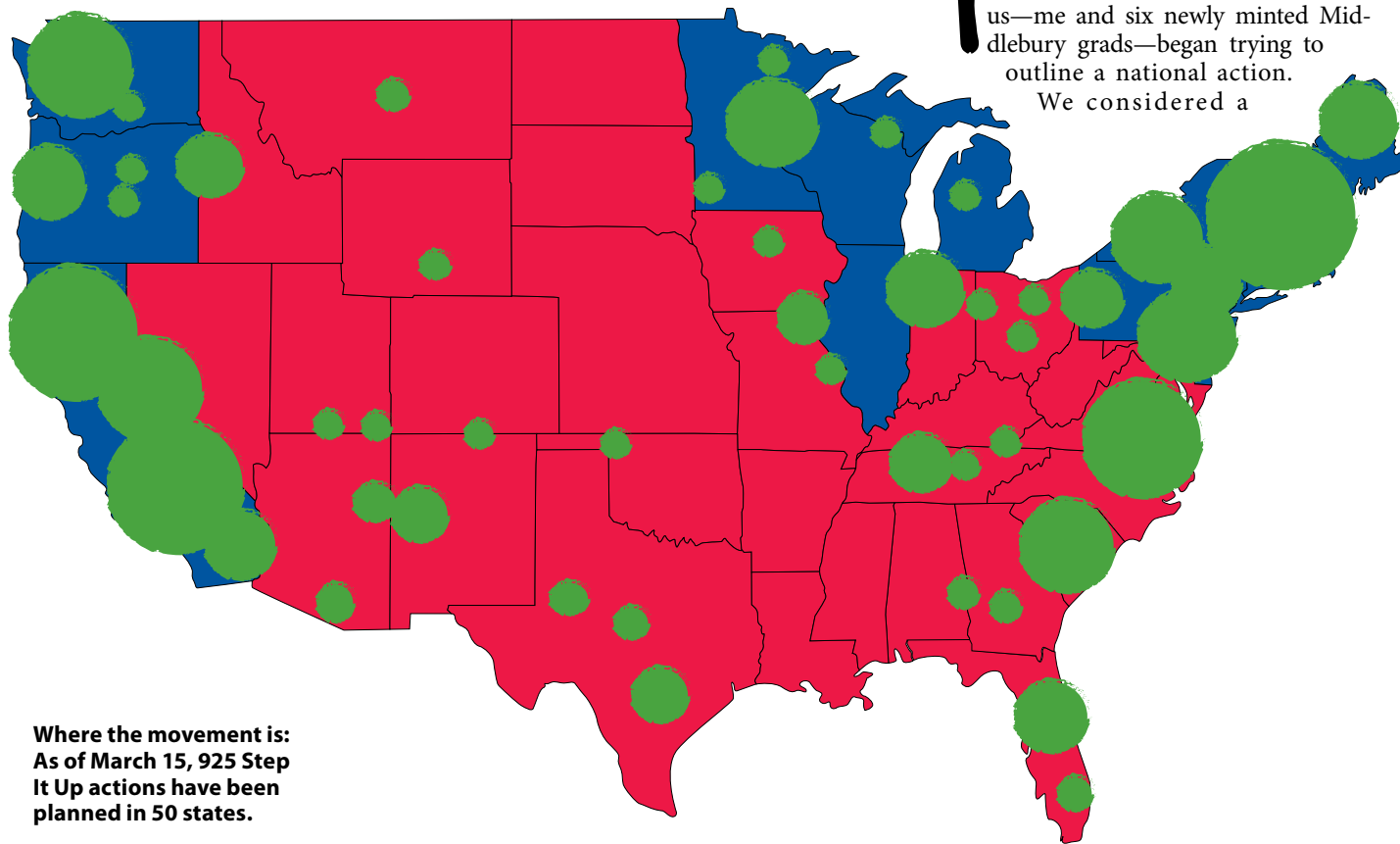
by 2050—the most ambitious climate change legislation yet proposed on Capitol Hill. It reminded us that you don't need 51 percent of the people supporting something—you just need an organized group of people who really care.

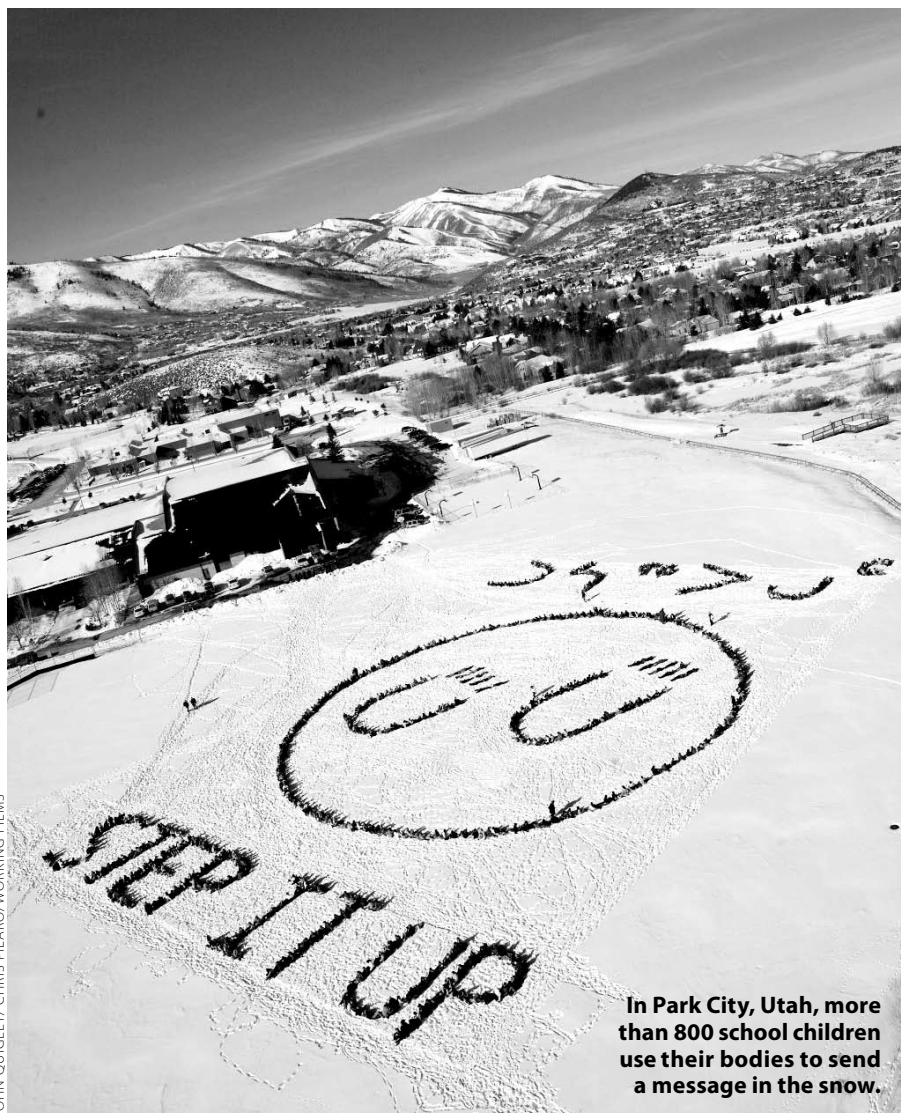
But here's the shocking part. The newspapers said that the thousand people we'd assembled was the largest gathering that had ever happened in the United States about global warming. Yes, you read that

all of the wonderful superstructure that a movement requires, but no mass mobilization to support them. That's what we need to change. Observers have always said that an uprising about climate was unlikely because few Americans were direct victims (yet) and all of us were in some sense beneficiaries of cheap fossil fuel. But what the march in Vermont told us was that the times had changed.

IN THE MONTHS that followed, a few of us—me and six newly minted Middlebury grads—began trying to outline a national action.

We considered a





In Park City, Utah, more than 800 school children use their bodies to send a message in the snow.

march on Washington—but, once again, the carbon emissions! Our experience in Vermont helped us understand how powerful it was to speak to our senators and representatives in their districts. So we hatched a plan: We would get people to stage rallies in the places they lived, or the places they loved, on the same day. Not Earth Day, April 22, because we didn't want to step on the inspiring work people were already doing for that day. Instead, we'd start the weekend before, as a kind of lead-up—and as a reminder that we need more than one day a year to think about the planet.

Those actions would take place in city parks and on church steps. And some would be staged in truly iconic places, which would remind anyone who heard about them of what was at stake. We raised enough money to

build our rudimentary Web site, www.stepitup2007.org, and then, in mid-January, started sending out e-mails. Our fondest hope? That by April 14 there might be a couple of hundred rallies scheduled around the country.

I'm writing these words on March 15. After 10 weeks of organizing, we have more than 900 Step It Up rallies scheduled, a number that increases by the hour.

What happened? We merely sent out invitations to a potluck. But people, desperate to do something, anything, to start stemming the tide of the coming environmental disaster, responded with not only their heads, but their hearts and hands.

FIRST TO STEP up have been the national environmental groups. There's been a lot of talk in recent years about "the death of environmental-

ism" and the big dinosaur green groups. Some people complained they had turned into mere fundraising machines, or become captives of the Beltway. But that is simply not true. The Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Wildlife Federation, among many others, have all committed real efforts to organizing Step It Up rallies, engaging regular people rather than just making technocratic recommendations.

Local environmental groups too—the wonderful stew of "Save the _____" groups that have done such powerful work over the years—understand that the future of the places they love can't be guaranteed by them alone. Raise the temperature a few degrees, bring the ocean a few feet higher, and the bay/swamp/forest is going to be wrecked no matter what.

But it's not simply traditional environmental groups who have joined the cause. Churches have responded in impressive numbers as well. A founder of the Evangelical Environment Network, Cal DeWitt, forwarded our appeal around that thriving web of seminaries and colleges. The *Christian Century*, the magazine of mainline Protestantism, put a big story on the cover. Sojourners, the radically engaged gospel mission, sent out an e-mail appeal. And in late February, we heard from a seventh grader who was planning on turning his big bar mitzvah bash into a Step It Up rally. Mazel tov!

But the response that has moved us the most has come from students. Those who think college campuses are dens of apathy and sloth must take note: There's a movement emerging across the nation's high school and college campuses, and the politics of climate are at its center. Energy Action, a coalition of more than 30 campus groups, endorsed Step It Up. The fruits of their labor were apparent one day when a digital photo arrived from the Alpha Phi sorority chapter at the University of Texas at Austin: 180 broadly smiling co-eds behind a big Step It Up banner. "We wanted to show it wasn't just hippies who cared," they wrote.

Athletes and other outdoors types have stepped up too. In Florida, scuba divers started organizing an underwater rally on a coral reef near Key West—a reef that won't be there in a few decades if the warming continues. In Wyoming, skiers plan a four-day trip down the state's highest mountain, Gannett Peak, including a descent of Dinwoody Glacier,

which is rapidly melting. Rock climbers will hang banners from Seneca Rocks in West Virginia.

Activists in half a dozen coastal cities plan to paint blue stripes along the streets where the new tide line will be in a warmer world. In Petaluma, Calif., they will mark with yellow tape what would be the high water mark of the Petaluma

It Up" against the Utah snow so we could photograph it for our Web site. Photographers have volunteered to provide arresting images, which we'll be webcasting before the day is over. And then there are the musicians: Working with MUSE/Cool the Planet, we've found songwriters aplenty who are writing new tunes. (There's even a Step It Up anthem from the Gallerists on

politically feasible right now, but we're just laying the groundwork for what's going to be a long campaign.

Come April 14, we'll have what's most important—a real in-the-streets movement that's able to grow and build, able to buttress the scientific and economic case for change with real political clout. We hope our particular goal is simple

Reducing carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2050 is a minimal demand scientifically. It may be the maximum that's politically feasible right now, but this has to be a long-term movement.

River should sea levels rise an estimated 6 to 22 feet due to climate change. In Manhattan's East Village, Girls Gone Green is going to team up with Reverend Billy's Church of Stop Shopping and march up to Central Park. Others plan to converge on bikes in city centers. In San Francisco, hybrid cars will parade across the Golden Gate Bridge. In New Orleans, citizens will rally along the levees. Seniors in retirement communities, elementary school kids, you name them, they are involved.

Aerial artists are working out ways for protesters to spell out the message with their bodies. In fact, 800 school kids in Park City already have spelled out "Step

the Web site.) All of this is music to our ears as history shows that movements that sing are movements that win.

And we need to win. We've wasted the last two decades. The scientific evidence now tells us that we can't wait any longer. We have to send Congress and our state and local legislators a message that is so clear and so unavoidable that they have to sit up and pay attention. The message needs to be heard by corporate leaders, small business owners and everyone in between that this is a matter that will affect everyone's bottom line in the years ahead. Reducing carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2050 is a minimal demand scientifically. It may be the maximum that's

enough for people to rally around, strong enough to begin meeting the scientific challenge, and specific enough to keep Congress members from simply making sweet, reassuring noises about climate change. Most of all, we hope we are helping midwife that necessary network of people who understand that once you change the light bulb, you have to go and change the law, and that to change the law, you have to change the conversation. ■

BILL MCKIBBEN is the author of 10 books, most recently *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*. He is a scholar in residence at Middlebury College in Vermont.



The Alpha Phi at the University of Texas at Austin, sent Step It Up this photograph along with the message: "We wanted to show it wasn't just hippies who cared."

WWW.STEPIUP2007.ORG

Biofuels: Promise or Peril?

The answer depends on how governments regulate the industry

BY DAVID MOBERG

WHEN MATT HAWKINSON STARTED growing corn in the rich farmland of western Illinois nearly a decade ago, he sold the grain for \$2 a bushel, 50 cents less than the cost him to produce it. Recently, buyers have been paying him \$4.35 a bushel. It's a welcome profit—even if it raises the cost of the hogs he feeds—and eliminates his need for government subsidies.

Hawkinson owes this good fortune to factories like those in the nearby towns of Galva and Pekin that turn corn into ethanol for fuel.

Yet the simple decision to make fuel from crops turns out to be anything but simple: it involves a tricky tangle of environmental, farm, trade, economic and foreign policy issues.

Biofuels—energy sources produced from dedicated crops and agricultural waste—have suddenly won wide support. The biofuel craze has been fueled by high oil prices, Mideast political turmoil, global warming fears, concern about low agricultural prices and high government subsidies, and the prospect of making money on the next big thing. Biofuels seem to promise a quick fix for worries about oil prices and supplies without the need for major technological changes. Is oil for the auto-industrial complex too expensive or fraught with problems? Just fill 'er up with biofuels.

But skeptics—on both the left and the right, including many environmentalists—argue that biofuels can't solve the world's energy problems. What's more, they argue, the biofuel solution threatens both the environment and the world's poor. In Mexico, the doubling of global ethanol production and quadrupling of biodiesel production in the past five years has led to protests over high prices for corn tortillas. And in Southeast Asia and Latin America it has raised concerns that rainforests are being cleared to cultivate crops for fuel.



An ethanol production plant in South Dakota.

Both sides in the debate marshal studies predicting promise or peril. Ultimately, the evidence suggests that biofuels could be one valuable source of renewable energy. But for biofuels to deliver on that promise, governments will need to both tightly regulate agricultural and land-use practices, and carefully tailor trade and economic policies. Most important, the world—especially the United States—will have to greatly increase how efficiently it uses energy.

The biofuel allure

Biofuels seem straightforwardly attractive. Farmers capture solar energy through their crops, which take up carbon dioxide as they grow. Theoretically this off-sets the carbon dioxide released when they are burned, thus reducing the world's output of greenhouse gases (GHGs). Energy crops can be grown nearly everywhere, potentially providing income for peasants and farmers around the world. The main biofuels today are

ethanol made from plant carbohydrates and sugars (like corn and sugar cane) and, to a lesser extent, biodiesel made from oilseeds (like soybeans, palm nuts, and rapeseed). Currently in development, and showing great promise, is ethanol made from woody, cellulosic plants (like switchgrass or miscanthus, as well as organic waste).

But cultivating the crops and processing them into fuel requires energy (or fossil fuel derivatives, like fertilizers), and much of that energy now comes from natural gas and coal. For years, scientists David Pimentel of Cornell and Tad Patzek of University of California at Berkeley have claimed that the energy output from ethanol made from bio mass is less than the fossil-fuel energy used to produce the ethanol.

Other experts respond that their calculations of this energy balance fail to reflect the efficiencies of new facilities, overcount energy inputs and ignore the energy value of byproducts, such as the

distillers' mash that animals can eat. In fact most studies show that ethanol from corn provides more energy than goes into its production, according to a 2006 review by Berkeley scientists Alexander Farrell, Daniel M. Kammen and others.

Yet in terms of global warming, the carbon balance—or contribution to reducing GHGs—is more important than the energy balance. The Berkeley review concludes that, overall, ethanol from current sources only modestly reduces GHGs.

Farming techniques and the choice of crops determine the extent to which biofuels reduce GHGs. For corn-based ethanol, the estimates range from a 36 percent reduction in GHGs to a 29 percent increase, depending on cultivation practices. The best reduction would come from using woody plants and grasses, like miscanthus and switchgrass, which could reduce GHGs by 90 percent compared to gasoline. In addition, some cellulosic feedstock plants can thrive in soils that are marginal or depleted, possibly enriching and saving the topsoil while sequestering carbon.

That is not what is happening in most of the tropics. In the near future, tropical biofuels from sugar cane and oil palm have a price advantage, and big agribusiness operators are slashing rainforests for plantations that deplete soils, reduce biodiversity and eliminate wildlife habitat. In 2006, the Worldwatch Institute reported, "If biofuels are produced from low-yielding crops, are grown on previously wild grasslands or forests, and/or are produced with heavy inputs of fossil energy, they have the potential to generate as much or more GHG emissions than petroleum fuels do." In Indonesia and Malaysia, for example, the burning of forests and peat bogs to clear land for palm oil plantations has unleashed vast quantities of carbon dioxide, overwhelming any modest GHG gains from biodiesel.

Promise or peril?

Energy farming also poses tough questions about how the world uses its land: Is there enough cultivable land to produce significant quantities of fuel? And won't fuel crops compete with food crops, raise food prices and hurt the world's poor?

Once again, the scientific estimates vary widely. According to Worldwatch, studies predict that bioenergy could sustainably provide more than twice the

global energy demand and also project that "bioenergy could supply only a fraction of current energy use by 2050, perhaps even less than it does today."

The competition over use of land for food or fuel will be much greater in developing countries than in the United States, unless farmers grow energy crops on mar-

of farmers throughout the world, and a large fraction of the world's poorest people are peasants. With higher grain prices, U.S. and European farmers could sustain themselves without the current costly subsidies that lead to dumping underpriced grain on the world market, which drives down prices for peasants everywhere.

According to one think tank, producing enough ethanol to replace world gasoline demand would require five times more corn than is planted today and 15 times as much sugar cane.

ginal lands or rely heavily on agricultural wastes. According to a December 2006 study by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), a global think tank, producing enough ethanol to replace world gasoline demand would require five times more corn than is planted today and 15 times as much sugar cane, assuming those are the two main sources.

But the impact on food prices would depend on how the biofuel boom develops.

According to another IFPRI study, different mixtures of crops and technology improvements could raise corn prices by as much as 41 percent or as little as 23 percent by 2020. Higher grain prices will have a mixed effect: They would boost incomes

Local economies would grow and urban workers would also benefit, but probably not enough—certainly in the short run—to compensate for higher food prices. Critics worry that biofuel production will increase world hunger. But low incomes—not lack of food—are the main reason for world hunger. And the answer to that problem is to raise urban and rural workers' incomes, partly by assuring that all people have the right to organize industrially and politically.

But with big landowners and industrialists having the advantages of wealth and power, it is doubtful that farmers and peasants will reap the benefits of biofuels. David Morris, vice president of the St.

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Paul-based Institute for Local Self-Reliance, argues that ethanol programs in the United States must be designed to favor farmer-owned cooperatives, which have a significant but declining share of the American market.

If global trade in biofuels develops more dramatically, big business will promote biofuel exports over domestic food production in developing countries, and as a result the natural environment will be destroyed and peasants and tribal people will be forced off their lands. Some biofuel strategists, such as John Mathews, the Australian author of "A Biofuels Manifesto," argue that biofuels be certified in order to guarantee that they were produced in a socially and ecologically sustainable manner.

Fuel for politics

U.S. politicians of varied stripes have played up biofuels as a strategy for energy independence. But the biofuel market will continue to be influenced by petroleum prices. Ethanol is now profitable in the United States because oil prices are over the competitive threshold of \$50 a barrel. But if corn prices go higher, or if oil prices drop, ethanol will be less competitive. Even now, domestic ethanol competes with Brazilian imports in large part because of a stiff tariff. And if tariffs are cut, as advocates of both free trade and cheap biofuels propose, the resulting increase in biofuel imports would undercut the goal of independence.

Though full energy independence may be illusory, increasing domestic biofuels production could significantly reduce the trade deficit. And poor, developing countries that are strapped for foreign exchange

could benefit greatly from substituting home-grown fuels for imported oil.

Whether the biofuel boom benefits or harms mankind will depend on how countries regulate the agricultural and industrial practices used to produce biofuels, including how much peasants, small farmers and workers benefit from

social responsibility for producers if the crops come from small family-owned farms. The government's ethanol policies have created 100,000 new jobs in the needy region and roughly 1 million new jobs in the whole country, while keeping 30 percent of sugar cane production in the hands of small farmers.

Some biofuel strategists argue that biofuels must be certified in order to guarantee that they are produced in a socially and ecologically sustainable manner.

the biofuel industry.

The editors of the IFPRI study, "Bioenergy and Agriculture," conclude: "Because most of the environmental and social benefits and costs of bioenergy are not priced in the market, leaving bioenergy development entirely to the private sector and the market will lead to bioenergy production and processes that fail to achieve the best environmental and social outcomes." Public policy choices are critical.

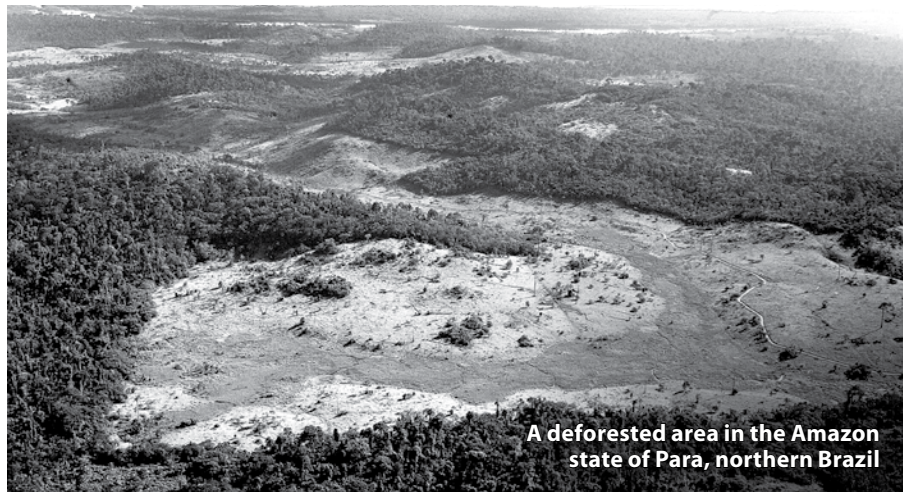
Brazil, virtually tied with the United States as the world's largest ethanol producer, illustrates both the good and the bad. The country has introduced some policies that have helped increase the social and environmental payoffs. Initially, the government drove the development of an ethanol industry and both flex-fuel and ethanol cars. Now it promotes production of biodiesel from crops grown on degraded, arid land in the historically poor Northeast, and it provides a seal of

Although sugar cane fields contribute to deforestation, cane is also planted on depleted rangeland, and the government requires that one-fourth of all plantation area is left in natural vegetation to preserve biodiversity and natural predators of crop pests.

But huge monoculture plantations contribute to deforestation. And most of the new jobs are very poorly paid and temporary. Big corporations and large landowners are consolidating control, often pushing peasants off their land and triggering a growing rural conflict. (See "The Multinational Beanfield War," p.27)

The biofuel potential will only be realized if governments everywhere push for energy efficiency and thereby reduce the need for massive farming for fuel. Daniel Kammen, a professor in the Energy and Resources Group at University of California, Berkeley, writes, "If the entire U.S. vehicle fleet were replaced overnight with [plug-in hybrid electric vehicles that combine internal combustion engines with electric motors and large batteries for recharging from an outlet], the nation's oil consumption would decrease by 70 percent or more, completely eliminating the need for petroleum imports."

If the world—but especially the United States—takes advantage of existing possibilities for energy efficiency and designed biofuel policies to protect the environment as well as farmers and workers in the industry, then the potential for biofuels is rosy. If, however, we continue to leave the development of biofuels to big corporations and the free market, the biofuel dream could warp into a social and environmental nightmare. ■



A deforested area in the Amazon state of Para, northern Brazil

ANTONIO SCORZA/GETTY IMAGES

The Multinational Beanfield War

Soy cultivation spells doom for Paraguayan campesinos

BY APRIL HOWARD AND BENJAMIN DANGL



Angelica Ramirez and her father, Meriton, in front of what was once their home.

RURAL EASTERN PARAGUAY USED to be full of jungle, small farms, schools and wildlife. Now it is a green sea of soybeans. The families, trees and birds are gone. The schools are empty. The air is filled with the toxic stench of the pesticides like paraquat and 2,4-D used to protect the soy crops.

We drove through the sea of soy on a red dirt road. Meriton Ramírez was bringing us to the former community of Minga Porá, to the farm where his family used to live. Ramírez is a member of the Asociación de Agricultores de Alto Paraná (ASAGRAPA), a farmer's union spearheading the fight against the expansion of the soy industry.

"I didn't want to leave. I built my farm and raised my children here. I planted fruit trees. For the first time in my life I had good land," Meriton says, motioning to the vacant space that used to be his home. "Then the soy farmers arrived

and we couldn't stand the fumigation." As he walks through the few trees left that his children had planted, he says, "The days following a fumigation we had terrible headaches, nausea and skin rashes, problems seeing, respiratory infections. The chickens died. The cows aborted their calves and their milk dried up." His crops perished along with his animals. In 2001, when Meriton and his family left the land they had occupied to farm, their old neighborhood had been reduced to nothing but soy fields.

The biofuel gold rush

In the mid '90s, if the pesticides didn't drive the farmers from their land, the soy industry stepped in with offers to buy or rent the land. ASAGRAPA members told us that when farmers refused to convert or sell, thugs showed up to convince them to grow soy or leave. "If you tried to resist, they'd kill you," Angélica Ramírez, Meri-

ton's daughter, says. Minga Porá, once a community of several thousand farmers, is now a home to only 30 families.

Soy production has increased exponentially in recent years due to rising demand worldwide for meat and cattle feed, as well as the booming biodiesel industry. Industrial soy is directed toward these markets, not the production of food for humans. In 1999, 44 million acres of soy were grown in South America; by 2004 this had more than doubled to 94 million acres. In the past six years, annual expansion of land cultivated for soy in Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay has exceeded 10 percent, mainly at the expense of rainforest and savannah.

Paraguay is the world's fourth-largest exporter of soybeans. In 2003, 5 million acres of land were devoted to soy cultivation—more than double the amount of 10 years ago. If the current trends continue, by 2020 the global demand for soy will rise by 60 percent. The projected increase translates into 370 million acres of cultivated land devoted to soy, and in Latin America an additional 54 million acres of forests and savannah destroyed.

Managing this gargantuan agro-industry are transnational seed and agro-chemical companies like Monsanto, Pioneer, Syngenta, Dupont, Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) and Bunge. All have become household names in Paraguay. In June 2006, the chief executive of Cargill told the *New York Times* that the biofuel industry is a "gold rush." International financial institutions and development banks have promoted and bankrolled the agro-export of monoculture crops. Cargill is a main beneficiary of WTO trade policies that grant increased subsidies to agribusiness and tax credits to refiners involved in biofuel production. ADM, whose stock price and profits have more than doubled since 2003, is another big player in Paraguay.

While Al Gore stresses that biofuels are

good for the environment (and evidently, business), two recent studies suggest otherwise. Researchers at the University of Minnesota caution that bio-fuels raise a host of land use issues, while a joint-study by scientists at Cornell University and the University of California-Berkeley concluded that both current and to-be-developed bio-fuels produce less energy than is consumed in growing and processing the crops. According to their study, biodiesel from soy results in a net energy *loss* of 27 percent.

Green invasion

Traditional Paraguayan agriculture is small-scale and based on a variety of crops, such as yucca, corn, beans and potatoes, and livestock, such as chickens, pigs and cows. *Campesinos* (small farmers) plant fruit trees to shade their houses and their crops during the blistering summers. "We knew the Brazilians weren't going to live on their land," Meriton says about the owners of the soy business near his home, "because they never planted any trees."

In Paraguay and Brazil, the soy industry is made possible by large-scale deforestation. While statistics are unavailable

for Paraguay, a recent World Wildlife Fund report for the International Energy Agency reveals that 80 percent of Brazil's greenhouse gas emissions come from deforestation. Official figures released in fall of 2006 show that during the 2005 logging season a forested area about the size of Ha-

crops. This outweighs any climate advantage advertised by biofuel production.

The biologically diverse Interior Atlantic Forest once covered 85 percent of eastern Paraguay. Due to isolation and difficult access, Paraguay was once a refuge for an estimated 7,000 to 8,000 species, including

In Paraguay, the expansion of the soy industry has occurred in tandem with violent oppression of small farmers and indigenous communities.

waii was cut. A 2006 NASA study found that in 2003 more than 20 percent of the forests in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso had been converted to cropland. The last agricultural census in Paraguay was taken in 1991, making statistics about the how much of that deforested land is used to plant soy guesswork at best. Embedded carbon dioxide is released when forests are cut down and the harvested wood is burned. An acre of land can absorb nearly twice as much CO₂ by remaining forested than it can when used to grow biofuel

rare and endangered flora and fauna such as the giant otter and the South American tapir. However, by 1991, high rates of deforestation (higher than that of any other South American country in the '90s) reduced Paraguay's forest by more than 80 percent. The deforestation has accelerated since, largely due to agricultural expansion. Today even the most liberal estimates suggest that no more than 12 percent of the original forest cover remains, and the general consensus is 5 to 8 percent.

Besides clearing land for agriculture, the soy industry is also harvesting forests for fuel. More than half of fuel wood consumed in Paraguay goes toward producing soybean oil, sugar, cement and coal. According to Angélica Ramírez, an environmental studies student in the agronomy department of the University of Ciudad del Este in Paraguay, this includes Cargill's oil-expelling plants.

Then there is the environmental problem caused by pesticides. "The soy workers also wash their machines in the river after spraying [pesticides]," she says. "Combined with the agricultural run-off, this means that there are no fish left in our rivers, and the water is completely contaminated."

"The poison never gives us a rest"

Paraguay has the most unequal land distribution in Latin America, with 95 percent of the land under private ownership in large estates. An incomplete and corrupt agrarian reform has left most *campesinos* landless, occupying unused land for subsistence farming. In Paraguay especially, the expansion of the soy industry has occurred in tandem with violent oppression of small farmers and indigenous communities. Farmers have been bullied into grow-

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ing soy with pesticides, at the cost of their food crops and subsequently their farms. Since the first soy boom, the industry has evicted almost 100,000 small farmers from their homes and fields and forced the relocation of countless indigenous communities. More than 100 *campesino* leaders have been assassinated, and more than 2,000 others have faced trumped-up charges for their resistance.

But there is often no need for thugs. Soy cultivation dumps more than 24 million liters of agro-chemicals in Paraguay every year, including World Health Organization Class I and II extremely and moderately hazardous pesticides. These include Paraquat, a chemical with no antidote if ingested, 2,4-D, Gramoxone, Metamidofos, which has proven to reduce sperm count and health in exposed males, and Endosulfan, a teratogenic substance that causes birth defects in the infants of repeatedly exposed mothers, according to the EPA. The Paraguayans we spoke with didn't use the terms pesticide or herbicide; they called the chemicals "*venenos*," venoms or poisons.

As we drove through the soy fields, a terrible smell often forced us to cover our noses and eyes. "That's the venom," says Angélica Ramírez.

"How would you describe the smell?" we ask.

"Dead dog," she says.

Leonida Laivas is Meriton Ramírez's old neighbor. Her land is a tiny island of trees in the sea of soy that is now Minga Porá. Her entire family suffers from stomach pains, headaches and sight problems due to the pesticides. "The poison never gives us a rest," she says. "Just yesterday the tractors came to spray the soy crops, and the wind blew it all over us. The water is full of poison too and gives us nausea and diarrhea." In the nearby town of San Isidro, cancer rates are high and several children have been born with malformed limbs.

Alternatives to disaster

Petrona Villasboa, who lives in the southern state of Itapúa, Paraguay, has become an internationally known symbol of resistance to the dangers of the soy industry. In 2003, her 11-year-old son Silvino died after he was caught in a cloud of the Monsanto herbicide cocktail Roundup from a crop duster on his way home from school. Villasboa pressed charges, but even after sentencing, subsequent appeals and lack of enforcement have left the owners at



A sea of soy is all that remains of the farming community of Minga Porá.



"Once, many companies owned silos in Paraguay," says Angélica Ramírez. "Now they are all Cargill."

home and using the same chemicals. Villasboa is determined to see them in jail.

"I'm not doing this just for Silvino," she says "but because there are lots of kids left who are still alive. So many people have died in our community, and people said nothing"

Villasboa isn't the only one saying something today. The Ramírez family now lives in another community, with another vision. *El Triunfo* is a community formed by farmers involved in ASAGRAPA, and is designed to prove that small-scale, non-

chemical agriculture is possible. The land is communally owned and farmers aren't allowed to sell their land.

"There has to be a change," ASAGRAPA President Tomás Zayas says. "Because if not, we are facing the end of the Paraguayan *campesino*." ■

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The Royal Road to Irrelevance

The 'French Hillary' is squandering the Socialists' presidential hopes

BY DOUG IRELAND

VOTING IN FRANCE'S TWO-STAGE presidential elections begins on April 22—and the question is, has the Socialist Party, leader of the parliamentary opposition, learned anything from its past mistakes?

The Socialists' candidate, Ségolène Royal, is the first woman ever nominated by a major party and is often called in the press "the French Hillary." (It's not meant as a compliment.) A fervent admirer of Tony Blair and his "Third Way," Royal built her candidacy on "family values" and a hard line on law-and-order, proposing, for example, that juvenile delinquents be turned over to the military for "re-education."

She faces a formidable opponent: right-wing candidate Nicolas Sarkozy, boss of the conservative UMP party founded by incumbent President Jacques Chirac. A skilled demagogue and master media manipulator who benefits from the favor of the conservative media barons, Sarkozy is a tough, law-and-order interior minister who spear-headed a crackdown on France's Arab and black immigrants, deporting them wholesale. His borderline racist comments helped fan the flames of the suburban ghetto riots that set France ablaze in the fall of 2005.

The background to this year's campaign includes two stinging defeats for the Socialists. In the last presidential election in 2002, the Socialist candidate, Prime Minister Lionel Jospin—who governed as a lackluster technocrat and notably opened his campaign by declaring that his was "not a socialist program"—was defeated for a place in the runoff against Chirac by neo-fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen. Disillusioned Socialist voters protested against Jospin's tepid governance by voting for several small Trotskyist parties of the extreme left, which together racked up 10.4 percent of the vote, clearing the way for Le Pen.

Then, in May 2005, the Socialists suffered another slap in the face in the ref-



French Socialist Party presidential candidate Ségolène Royal visits the Forbidden City in Beijing on Jan. 7.

BERTRAND GUAY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

erendum on a proposed European Constitution. The party's leaders lobbied in favor of the EuroConstitution, but voters—including a 10-point majority of the Socialists' electorate, two-thirds of salaried employees and three-quarters of the working class—rejected the document as a blueprint for control by multinational corporations. Ségolène Royal and her domestic partner and the father of her four children, Socialist Party boss François Hollande, both supported the EuroConstitution. Hollande went so far as to pose for a photograph with Sarkozy for the cover of *Paris Match* urging a Yes vote.

There are several reasons why Royal won designation as the Socialist candidate this year, in a vote of the dues-paying party membership (a majority of whom are government bureaucrats or teachers). First, the party initiated a well-advertised join-by-Internet program that brought thousands of new members, mostly yuppies with only the vaguest of socialist commitments, into the party.

Second, as the first credible female presidential candidate she got the kind of massive and uncritical media coverage most candidates can only dream of—for example, France's largest newsweekly, the mildly-left *Nouvel Observateur*, ran a series of puff-piece cover stories on Royal. This catapulted her in the opinion polls to near equality with Sarkozy—and, after the 2002 debacle, the Socialists wanted a candidate who looked like a winner.

Third, Royal's opponents for the nomination were two tired, damaged and all-too-familiar party "Elephants" (as the Socialists' Old Guard is known). One of them was Laurent Fabius, an aging dandy who had been France's youngest-ever prime minister under Socialist President François Mitterrand in the '80s. Because he had implemented Mitterrand's capitalist economics, sweeping denationalizations, and a severe austerity program back in the day, Fabius lacks credibility despite having been elected to leader of the party's left two years ago.

Royal's other rival was Dominique

Strauss-Kahn, the Jospin government's minister of finance and leader of the party's right wing, who had been chased from office after his indictment in corruption scandals (although he was later acquitted). Compared to these two "Elephants," Royal was a fresh face.

Fourth, her domestic partner, Hollande, who controls the party's apparatus with a firm hand, helped her corral the support of the powerful local bosses of the regional Socialist Party federations. (Indeed, Royal's campaign for the nomination was marked by accusations of the stuffing of membership rolls, vote fraud and other unsavory manipulations on the part of these local bosses.)

But since her nomination, Royal's campaign has been plagued by a multitude of troubles. On many issues she has taken no position at all, endlessly repeating her slogan, "My position is the position of the French people." While a member of parliament since 1988, she lacks any foreign policy experience, which has led to a number of very public gaffes. She made an ill-advised trip to China—with its itinerary entirely planned and paid for by the Beijing government—on which she conspicuously failed to raise the question of human rights (while earning additional derision for repeatedly inventing non-existent Chinese proverbs before the TV cameras). She made an equally publicized trip to Israel, during which she endorsed the Wall of Shame that fences off Palestinians, thus alienating the considerable Franco-Arab vote.

In addition, her elitist campaign—Royal has insisted that her campaign headquarters' switchboard phone number remain unlisted—has been an organizational disaster. Run by her hand-picked cronies and flayed with charges of amateurism from party leaders who felt excluded, her campaign treasury was so depleted by early misspending that little money was left for campaign literature and posters—the staples of French election campaigns.

Royal tried to jump-start her uninspiring, centrist campaign by unveiling a nationally televised "Presidential Pact," a grab-bag of vague rhetoric (the ghettos went unmentioned, and she marked her pro-capitalist bias by proclaiming, "We must reconcile the French with business") and expensive promises that tap-danced slightly to her left. But it was worse than a dud—a week after its an-

nouncement, Éric Besson, who had been in charge of figuring out how much the Presidential Pact's promises would cost and how to pay for them, very publicly resigned. France's national treasury is groaning under a crushing national debt. Besson had refused to cook the books to make Royal's program sound cheaper.

As a result of all this, with Royal either stagnant or declining in opinion polls, by

becomes convinced that Bayrou, not Royal, is more likely to beat him, the more they will continue to desert to the centrist candidate.

The same polls also show that only between 32 and 36 percent of voters are now saying they intend to vote for a left candidate in the first round of voting—the lowest level since 1969, when the left was eliminated from a runoff between Presi-

Ségolène Royal's campaign has been so poorly managed, there's a distinct possibility of a replay of 2002, with the Socialist candidate being shut out of the ensuing two-candidate runoff election.

early March even the pro-Royal *Nouvel Observateur* was reporting that "panic has taken hold of the Socialist Party's elected officials," and that, without a total overhaul of her campaign, "her failure is assured." Royal subsequently announced a "renewal" of her campaign that brought Fabius and Strauss-Kahn on board in more public roles, but the campaign apparatus and strategy changed little. Sarkozy now leads her in a head-to-head match-up by between 6 and 8 percent in the polls.

There is even the possibility of a replay of 2002, with the Socialist candidate being shut out of the runoff—not by Le Pen, but by the centrist François Bayrou. Leader of the small UDF party founded in the '70s by President Valéry Giscard-d'Estaing, Bayrou didn't even garner 7 percent in the 2002 elections. But in recent weeks his campaign rejecting "the failed traditional cleavage of left-right" has brought him a rapid rise in the polls tripling that figure, bringing him within striking distance of Royal. One poll showed them dead even as *In These Times* went to press. Bayrou, an attractive TV presence, has been courting the left electorate, even saying he would appoint someone from the left as his prime minister (most likely, Dominique Strauss-Kahn). A leader of the Socialists' left wing, Senator Jean-Luc Mélenchon, has issued a public cry of alarm, saying that "Bayrou's powerful rise in the polls threatens to turn the political landscape upside-down." Indeed, the polls show Bayrou beating Sarkozy by as much as 10 points in a runoff, while Royal loses to him. And the more the left electorate—which fears and loathes Sarkozy—

dent Georges Pompidou and the centrist Alain Poher. The tiny Trotskyist parties of the extreme left—along with the independent, anti-globalization and environmental leader candidate José Bové; Green Party candidate Dominique Voynet; and the Communists' Marie-George Buffet—are all stuck this year at around 2 percent or less. This means, as *Le Monde* puts it, that "the conundrum which now perturbs the Socialist leadership is: how to simultaneously rally all of the reduced left electorate (including voters for the left-of-the-left parties) while at the same time appealing to the voters attracted by the centrist, and have enough votes in reserve for Royal to win the run-off"—assuming, of course, that she is even in it. That simultaneous appeal to the radical left and the center will be difficult for Royal to pull off. And even the Socialists' resident polling expert, Gerald Gall, has warned party leaders that there's a real possibility Royal could be knocked out of the run-off by Bayrou.

There are large unknowns—40 percent of those polled say they still haven't decided whom they'll vote for. As for Le Pen, who is between 13 and 15 percent in the polls, opinion surveys have traditionally underestimated his vote, since many are reluctant to say they'll vote for an openly racist candidate. So the final outcome of France's presidential election is, at this point, unpredictable. It will be an interesting race to watch. ■

DOUG IRELAND lived in France for a decade and is a former columnist for the *Paris daily, Liberation*. He can be reached through his blog at <http://direland.typepad.com/direland/>.

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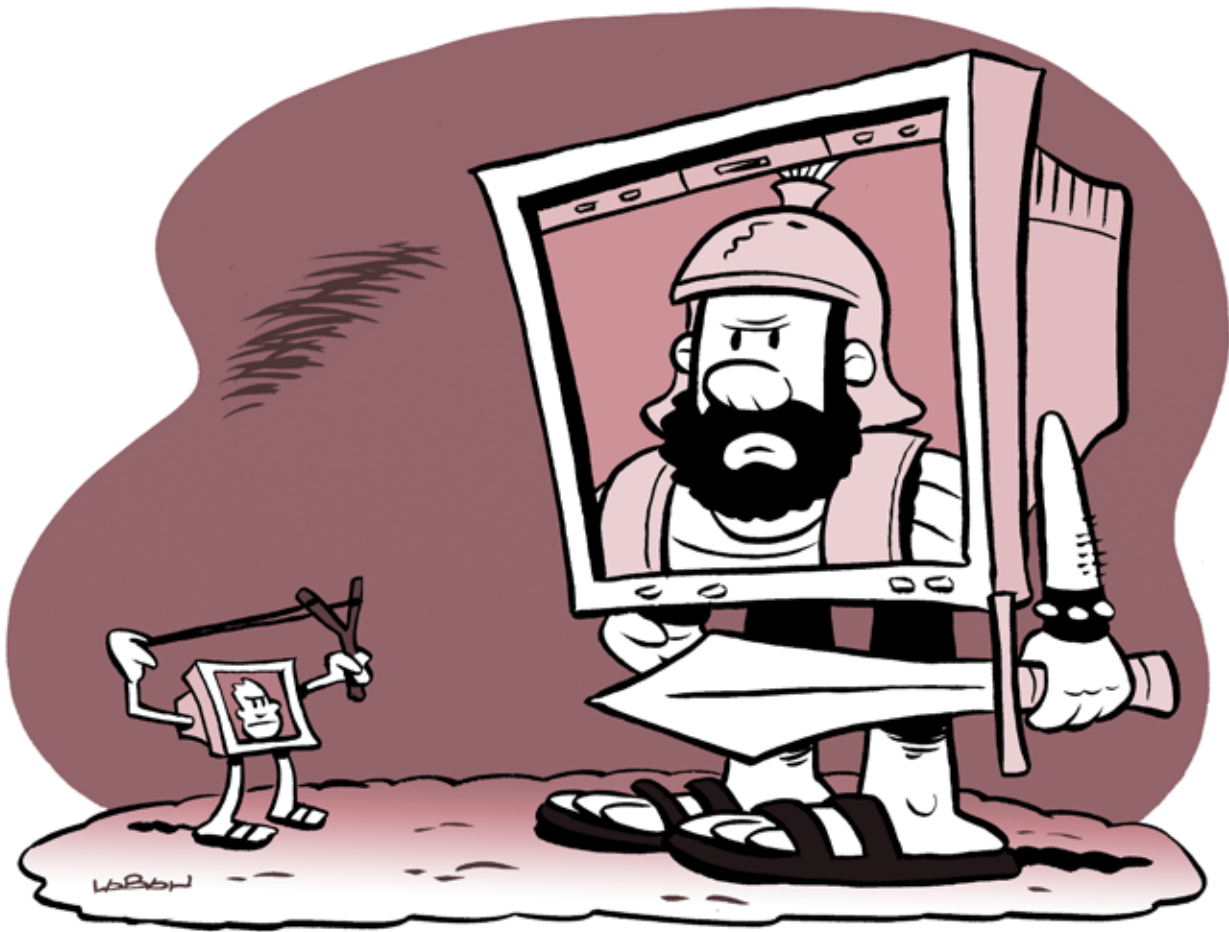
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Not Neutrality

Why are the Communications Workers of America opting out of the Save the Internet coalition?

BY BRIAN COOK

LAST YEAR, THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS industry did their best to build a tiered Internet that would have privileged the Web sites that paid companies like AT&T and Verizon an additional fee and degraded the speeds of Web sites that did not. But it was the advocates of “net neutrality”—the Internet’s long-standing design principle that prevents service providers from discriminating against any content, Web site or platform—who ended up with a string of impressive victories.

After the House overwhelmingly passed the Communications Opportunity, Protections and Enhancement (COPE) Act without neutrality provisions in June, a massive grassroots campaign erupted, scaring enough senators away from its companion version to insure the legislation died on the vine. Then, in a development described by Columbia University law professor Timothy Wu as a “milestone,” AT&T agreed in December to respect net neutrality for the next two years in order to have the FCC approve its merger with Bell South.

Much of the success can be attributed to the SaveTheInternet.com Coalition spearheaded by the nonpartisan media reform

organization, Free Press. The coalition is more than just a “big tent”; its 700-plus membership list of bloggers, church groups, academics, video gamers, small businesses and advocacy groups is so ideologically broad as to be laughably democratic. Here if nowhere else can lefty stalwarts like Feminist Majority, the ACLU and SEIU break bread with the Christian Coalition of America, Gun Owners of America and the American Patriot Legion, who in turn sit alongside the World Pantheist Movement, the Chocoholic Society and Legion of Death, whose Web site helpfully explains that its “number one purpose ... is to recruit players of Chrome Hounds.”

But amidst this bevy of strange bedfellows, is one conspicuous absence: the Communications Workers of America (CWA), the union that represents 700,000 media and telecommunications industry workers. And the CWA isn’t just sitting on the sidelines. Last May, when the House was considering pro-neutrality legislation, CWA President Larry Cohen wrote a letter to the House Judiciary Committee, arguing that if such a bill passed, “investment in the physical infrastructure necessary to provide high-speed Internet would slow down, the U.S. will fall even further behind the

rest of the world, and our rural and low-income populations will wait even longer to enter the digital age.” Meanwhile, at the state level, the CWA has vociferously opposed attempts, most notably in Michigan, to mandate net neutrality in the local and state franchise agreements with telecommunications companies that set up conditions of service quality and community benefit provisions.

REPRESENTATIVES AT FREE Press refused to speak on the record about the CWA’s opposition to net neutrality. It’s easy to guess why: One of their branches is housed on the eighth floor of the CWA Building in Washington, D.C. But their reticence shouldn’t be solely attributed to fear of incurring their landlord’s ire. Despite the schism over net neutrality, the groups share a broad consensus on a variety of media issues, including many closely related to neutrality itself. Debbie Goldman, a research economist at the CWA, says, “We probably agree with 95 percent [of the platform] of those supporting net neutrality.”

Both the CWA and the SavetheInternet.com coalition agree that the current state of broadband in the United States is, in Goldman’s assessment, “abysmal.” In terms of the percentage of its population with broadband access, the United States has steadily fallen in recent years and now ranks 16th in the world. Meanwhile, the speed of the average broadband connection in the United States is between 1 and 3 megabits per second (mbps) for DSL and 3 to 5 mbps for cable modems; in Japan, 80 percent of the country’s connections are at 100 mbps. Even worse, Japanese consumers pay exactly the same as Americans for these connections.



All sides also agree on many of the steps needed to improve this situation. First, the FCC’s absurdly low definition of what constitutes broadband—0.2 mbps—must be revised upwards. Second, the FCC should create a national broadband map that would detail the geographical areas that do and do not have access to broadband. (ConnectKentucky—an alliance of local governments, universities and tech companies that did precisely this for that state—has developed an excellent model.) Finally, the FCC should subsidize broadband as well as phone services for low income and rural areas through its Universal Service Fund, financed by the fees that telecommunications companies charge their customers each month.

But where the two sides disagree is on the principle of non-discrimination. Neutrality proponents fear that, without it, companies like AT&T or Verizon could potentially degrade or outright block any Web site that they want. If legislators make net neutrality the law of the land, the potential for malfeasance disappears, because the non-discriminatory principle would be enshrined into the very architecture of the Web itself.

“Would Verizon or AT&T necessarily degrade or block any Web site that was critical of them or corporations?” asks Brian Dolber, a Ph.D candidate at the University of Illinois who studies the history of relations between labor and mass media. “I don’t know, but why not have it instituted into the law that they can’t do that? That’s what net neutrality protects and does.”

In theory, the CWA agrees. “Speed Matters,” its recent policy paper on U.S. broadband, states, “Consumers are entitled to an open Internet allowing them to go where they want, when they want. Nothing should be done to degrade or block access to any websites.” Instead of advocating for net neutrality, however, the CWA endorsed the anti-blocking provisions in the COPE Act. But neutrality activist derided those provisions as “toothless” and further decreed that the act terminated the FCC’s authority to expand on them.

Neutrality proponents also note that any portions of bandwidth reserved by corporations for higher speed traffic will take away from bandwidth for all of the other, slower traffic. Thus, a tiered Internet could lead to de facto degradation through congestion, as the majority of non-paying users would be forced to make do with much less bandwidth.

“We want to make sure that independent, non-commercial information, dissent, news, innovation, women and minorities, people who are not part of the system now should not have to go onto the slow lane,” says Jeff Chester, a longtime media activist and author of the new book, *Digital Destiny*. He charges that “because the CWA wants to be able to preserve jobs at AT&T and Verizon, in essence they’re willing to sanction a gilded digital toll road, which would mean that most progressive content that sanctions CWA’s own values couldn’t make it through.”

Goldman says the union is simply more concerned with building out networks and increasing their speed, which she believes will render moot any concerns about congestion. “If we have 100 mbps, we’d have so much capacity that the whole issue [of congestion] goes away,” Goldman says. “The real goal is getting big, big broadband so that there isn’t an issue of congestion, which then raises concerns about whether there’d be different types of service. That’s the real goal: How do you get it built? How do you get to big broadband?”

NO ONE KNOWS exactly how much it will cost to build out a universal, affordable, high-speed network, but most estimates suggest it will cost in the tens, perhaps hundreds, of billions of dollars. And Goldman notes that the political landscape in the United States is far different than in Sweden—where the government is simply building a universal high-speed network to individual homes—or even Japan, which has subsidized massive low-interest loans and allowed for accelerated depreciation.

“We’re America, where there’s capitalism, and companies invest where there’s a return on their capital,” she says. “How are the companies going to pay for this? Their business model, and our position, is that, in order to pay for the public good of the high speed network, these companies should be able to have a private video network.”

As Goldman notes, most neutrality proponents have no problem allowing private video networks. But they fear that if neutrality is scrapped, the telecommunications companies will begin to expand their business model around discrimination. They cite a 2005 *Business Week* article, in which the CTO of Bell South explained that his firm “should be able, for example, to charge Yahoo Inc. for the opportunity

to have its search site load faster than that of Google Inc.”

For Chester, that scenario is unacceptable. “The American consumers—including, ironically, CWA members—have paid for the broadband system in the United States several times over through their monthly bills for phone, cable, satellite and now high-speed Internet access,” Chester says. “The idea that the phone and cable industry need to capture additional profits to build out the broadband network is a fallacious one.”

He attributes the CWA’s stance to a “narrow protectionism that sees the world so defensively, it’s not been able to embrace a proactive strategy that would be a win-win, a win for the union movement and a win for progressivism.” But if the CWA views the world defensively, it’s hard to argue that it shouldn’t. AT&T is only just beginning to recover from the recession in the early 2000s, during which the CWA saw its membership decrease by some 40,000 workers, more than 5 percent of its total. Furthermore, as Goldman points out, in 2005 AT&T and Verizon employed more than 400,000 workers (many of them unionized), which was more than four times the number of workers at Amazon, Yahoo, eBay, Google and Microsoft combined.

Dolber, who has researched CWA’s historical relationship with the telecom industry, largely agrees with Chester, calling the CWA’s anti-neutrality stance “completely counter to democracy.” But he also says it is “understandable.”

“In an industry that has faced so much difficulty in the last 25 years, it makes sense that they would want to make sure that their employers are stable,” he says. “That’s where they work—they don’t want these companies to go belly-up.”

He also notes that the CWA isn’t alone among unions that have favored their members’ interests above those of society as a whole, citing the Teamsters’ stance on drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the United Auto Workers’ position on Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency standards. However, he says, “some unions are coming together to talk about energy and pollution and those kinds of things, and I think that really does need to start happening in the media reform movement as well.”

It’s a discussion that can’t happen soon enough. At some point in the coming months, both the Senate and the House

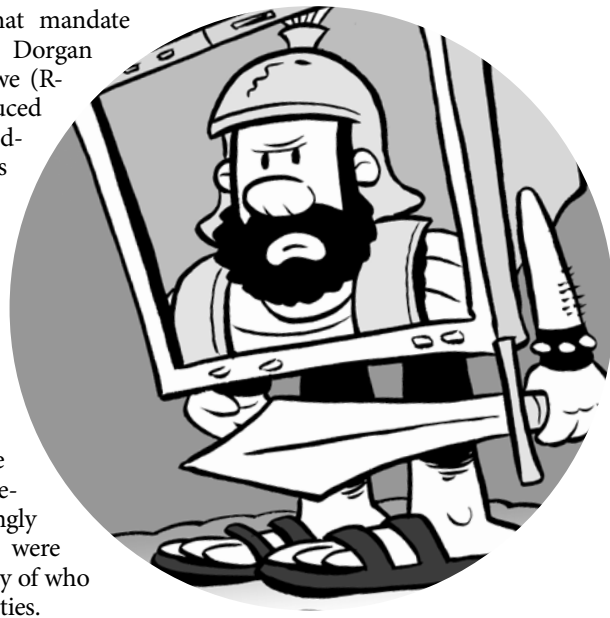
likely will consider bills that mandate net neutrality. Sens. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) and Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) have already introduced such legislation, and Rep. Edward Markey (D-Mass.) plans to introduce a bill similar to the amendment that he attempted to attach to the COPE Act last June.

That amendment—which would have mandated neutrality—was soundly defeated by a 269–152 vote. Neutrality proponents hope a Democratic-controlled House will change that. But while Republicans voted overwhelmingly against the measure, they were joined by 58 Democrats, many of who are renowned for their union ties.

With deadlock at the federal level, AT&T and Verizon have begun campaigning at the state level to insure that franchise agreements do not include neutrality provisions. They also want to minimize the requirements for buildout and Public-Education-Government (PEG) subsidies, win the rights to “cherrypick” which areas and neighborhoods to serve, and restrict the regulatory power of municipalities.

With so many different advocates for these individual issues, it can be difficult to build a coalition united enough to defeat the telecommunications industry. In Michigan, for example, a franchising bill without neutrality provisions passed easily in the state house and senate, in large part because its buildout requirements, while not great—servicing 50 percent of the state within 5 years—were considered good enough. It didn’t hurt, either, that AT&T promised to provide up to \$600 million in infrastructure and 2,000 jobs if the legislation were passed. (The CWA strongly supported the legislation, with their vice president at one point accusing Google of attempting to “hijack a pro-consumer, pro-labor bill” for bringing up concerns about its lack of neutrality provisions.)

ON MARCH 1, the Progressive States Network, an advocacy group for progressive policies at the state level, hosted a teleconference about what provisions should be implemented in these state franchise agreements. Along with two state legislators, the other participants were the CWA’s Goldman and Ben Scott, policy director of Free Press.



For most of the call, the speakers carefully touched on only the areas of consensus outlined above. But when the floor was opened up to callers for a Q&A, fissures began to emerge.

One woman called from Pennsylvania, which last year saw a giant fight over neutrality provisions, and pointedly asked about mandating them at the state level. Another man called from Lafayette, La., which has been battling Bell South and Cox Communications for years over the city’s attempts to provide municipal broadband to its residents. “An effective broadband strategy must allow for public ownership of the networks,” he declared angrily. “There’s a distinction between the interests of these corporations and the interests of communities. It became very clear in the fiber fight down here.”

Finally, a woman who identified herself as a worker at the CWA spoke up. “All of this seems like such a no-brainer,” she said, “in terms of the benefits of a broadband strategy, for jobs, for education, for people with disabilities and health care. What’s become clear from the call is that some of the barriers to getting this done are going to be differences within our own ranks. But where’s the opposition coming from on the outside?”

When it was her time to respond to that question, Goldman said she was “thrilled” that “the workers who are building and maintaining and servicing the networks” were taking such an interest in these issues. But, she never got around to confronting the question. ■

BY ROBERT HIRSCHFIELD

An Israeli Refusenik's Good Fight

In September 2003, in the midst of Israel's campaign of targeted assassinations against Palestinian terrorists, a 31-year-old Black Hawk helicopter pilot named Yonatan Shapira terrorized Israel's military high command without committing a single act of violence.

In the Pilots' Letter of Refusal that he authored and 26 other pilots signed, these historic words were written: "We, who were raised to love the state of Israel and contribute to the Zionist enterprise, refuse to take part in Air Force attacks on civilian population centers. ... These actions are illegal and immoral, and are a direct result of the ongoing occupation which is corrupting all of Israeli society." Reading those words to an audience of progressive Jews, he added, "We will continue to serve the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), but not the Israeli occupation forces."

It wasn't the first time Israeli soldiers refused to serve—dissident soldiers forced a movement called Yesh Gvul (There Is A Limit) during the first Lebanese war in the early '80s. Shapira's letter, however, did mark the first time that pilots, the elite of the military and the darlings of society, defied military orders for reasons of conscience. They were promptly dismissed from the Air Force.

Shapira, the son of an Israeli pilot from an Ashkenazi family, is currently living with his girlfriend in Brooklyn and finishing his thesis for the European Center For Peace and Conflict Studies in Austria. His subjects are the Israeli pilots with whom he conducted countless hours of interviews.

How did the Israeli public react to you and to the other pilot-refusers?

There was a big uproar in the entire country. We had many supporters, and many opponents, of course. *Yedioth Aha-*

ronoth, the biggest newspaper in Israel, and Channel Two, the popular TV station, presented the statements, the interviews, the filming we prepared with them in advance. It was a scoop.

We had a lot of support within the Air Force. Many pilots who didn't agree to sign gave us moral support. The opposition, including Zionist leftists, called us traitors. People condemned us, but we were convinced, and still are, that we did the right thing for the country.

And those who ruled the country?

We made them feel afraid, vulnerable and weak, because we broke ranks, because we touched the very nerve of the system. It can't work without obedience. That's why the support we got from many pilots disturbed the Air Force and the government.

Following your own refusal, you called upon other pilots to say no to being pilots of the occupation. Didn't that put you at risk of doing major jail time?

I understood by then that they would not imprison us, or put us on trial, because that would serve our interests. We don't shoot or attack anyone. Our ammunition is public attention. We would have welcomed being charged with acting against an illegal and immoral occupation.

Tell me about Combatants For Peace, the group of former Israeli and Palestinian fighters that you belong to.

Early in 2005, my brother Zohar made

contact with Sulaiman Al Hamri, a former Fatah fighter, in Bethlehem. Some weeks later a meeting took place between Israeli refuseniks and Palestinian ex-prisoners and fighters. We were suspicious of each other at first, but by telling our stories, we created a bond. We agreed that we should meet, dialogue, struggle together against the occupation. One of our actions was to help rebuild a Palestinian house that was destroyed by the army. Last April, we had a public lunch in a schoolyard in Anata, which was cut in two by the wall—60 Israeli and 60 Palestinian former fighters. We were joined by members of the European Parliament, even by members of the Knesset. The army fired a shock grenade over our heads.

Many in the Israeli peace movement supported the war in Lebanon. Why did they support it and you did not?

I think what differentiated us from groups like Shalom Achshav [Peace Now] was that, unlike them, we spent a lot of time in the occupied territories with the Palestinians, and with their suffering. We lost faith in our government and in the army. Many of my friends are against the occupation, but they still have faith in the government. They allowed themselves to be manipulated by the government. What was involved was a combination of basic fears, because we were attacked, and their buying into the idea that we could destroy Hezbollah.

What do you think about Defense Minister Amir Peretz, the former Labor Party leader whose name will forever be linked with the war in Lebanon?

Amir Peretz was a very sad example of someone in whom we had great hope, because he was not from the typical Ashkenazi [European Jewish] leftist background. Unfortunately, he was easy for the army to manipulate. He made an impressive statement before the elections: "There is no



One of Shapira's last flights in the Air Force in September 2003.

difference between a child in Gaza and a child in Sderot." He was a lefty leader who spoke of peace and social justice, and was one of those responsible for the absolutely crazy war in Gaza, and the war in Lebanon after that. I guess it was smart of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to make him defense minister and ruin him completely.

What is known about the morale of Israeli soldiers who fought in Lebanon?

There was a lot of confusion in the way the war was conducted. Soldiers were fighting a guerrilla war that they were not prepared or trained for. Many had previously manned checkpoints or roadblocks in the occupied territories. Their experience was in policing the West Bank. Pilots complained that their targets were not well-chosen. Moshe Yaalon, the former chief of staff, has said that some of the operations, especially those at the end of the war, when many soldiers were brought in, were carried out to make it appear to the public that we had won a victory.

My brother Itamar was called up and refused to go to war. As a citizen, he felt the best way to protect his country was to try to prevent this war, to demonstrate against it, and to try to convince other soldiers not to go. He was jailed for eight days. Others were put in jail for four weeks. Some

soldiers refused, but not publicly. I have a friend who called in to refuse. They told him, "OK, call us next week, and we may ask you to come in and talk with your commander." He didn't call, and nothing happened. But he was ready to go to jail.

What accounts for you and your brothers all being public dissidents?

We are just acting on the values we were raised with: democracy, equality, justice, caring about those who suffer. That's what we were taught at home, that's what we learned at school. Those values have been eroded by 40 years of occupation. But in the case of my brothers and I, and thousands of refusers and conscientious objectors, they are the values we live by.

Have you been threatened in Israel or the United States for speaking out?

I haven't been seriously threatened in Israel and certainly not here.

Yes, I received threats in Israel. One veteran right wing pilot said that people like me who disobey orders in wartime should be "put against the wall." But people these days are for the most part indifferent. And the foreign ministry said that our actions, and the fact that we weren't punished, shows that Israel is a democracy. Politically, they made it work to their advantage.

What is your perspective on Israel since the war in Lebanon, which many believe Israel lost?

I had the feeling at the end of this war that something good may come out of this loss. We have been trained and educated to think that winning wars is always good, and that's wrong. Having the strongest army, and being the most aggressive country, will not help us survive forever. To survive, we have to make peace with the Palestinians, with Syria, with Lebanon. I think this current generation of leaders will not lead us to that peace. That will happen only with massive international pressure, and when we have a new generation of leaders less controlled by fears and Holocaust syndromes. I see great potential in many of the young people now graduating high school, some of whom are going to jail instead of going into the army.

Also, you had reservists who came back from the war very disillusioned. They protested against Olmert, Peretz and IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz, demanding that they resign. But at the same time, Israel is becoming more and more nationalistic. A Nazi commander at the Nuremberg trials said, it's not hard to get people to go to war, just tell them they are being attacked. That's what happened here. Even the Labor Party, with its "peace agenda" agreed to remain in the government when Olmert made Avigdor Lieberman, the head of the extreme right wing Yisrael Beiteinu [Our Home], deputy prime minister.

What can be done here in the United States to pressure Israel to end the occupation?

First of all, the military aid to Israel has to stop. This coming year [2007??] it will amount to \$2.4 billion. Products from the settlements, and official representatives of the Israeli government should be boycotted. AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee], which works against the interests of my country, should be replaced by more moderate Jewish organizations.

The majority of Jews in America must start to act and stop worshipping the State of Israel like it was God. Some people say it's like the worship of the Golden Calf in the Bible. Idolatry. ■

ROBERT HIRSCHFIELD is a New York-based writer who covers Israeli and Palestinian peace activists. He has written for *The Progressive*, *The National Catholic Reporter* and *Sojourners*.



BY JESSICA CLARK

***Boomsday*: Bankrupt Satire**

Libertarians are a strange lot. Their targets often seem reasonable; their solutions myopic and partial. So it goes with Christopher Buckley's *Boomsday*, a sub-Swiftian sendup of the looming threat of an overwhelming federal deficit, set in the

carnivorous confines of D.C.'s wonkscape.

Cassandra Devine is a heroine for our spin-crazy times—or actually, for five years from now, when the first wave of Baby Boomers will be eligible to retire, an event dubbed “Boomsday.” A “strategic communicator” for excessive executives, pesticide manufacturers and mink-farmers, by night, the twenty-something blogger imbibes Red Bulls and Ayn Rand in equal measure and sets her sights on the greed of those determined to make her “Generation Whatever”—Gen W—peers foot the bill for their golden years. Her modest proposal? Offer senior citizens a reprieve from estate taxes in return for their voluntary suicide at retirement—a publicity ploy that she terms a “meta-political device.”

Cassandra's stunt, supposedly meant to prompt discussion of responsible government spending, spins

out of control when it hits the whirling fan of media attention. Her cause is helped along by the ministrations of her P.R. flak boss, support from an ambitious senator, and the high-profile disapproval of an unctuous pro-life minister who heads up the Society for the Protection of Every Ribonucleic Molecule (SPERM). Cassandra's excitable blog followers stage riots at gated communities, laud her call for a tax revolt, and cheer on her campaign for resource-hogging “wrinklies” to “voluntarily transition.” Elaborate hijinks ensue, and she ends up on the lam, a refashioned rebel with a cause, and a Blackberry.

Buckley—son of *the* Buckley of *National Review* fame—favors a reductively Freudian brand of character development. Cassandra's fury stems from her Beemer-driving father's decision to invest her college fund into his tanking dot-com. Both the self-indul-

gent liberal senator, Randolph K. Jepperson, and his nemesis, the rotund and foppish evangelist, Gideon Payne, seek power as a response to the disapproval of their overbearing mothers. Such devices allow Buckley to generate sympathy for even his most unlikable characters.

When not following psychological compulsions, *Boomsday*'s dramatis personae are driven by generational dictates. Born in 1952, Buckley slaps his own generation as unrepentant hypocrites, hooked on perks and entitled to the point of narcissism. As Cassandra's boss, Terry Tucker, explains, "Everyone sells out. Boomers just figured out how to make it an entire industry." But this doesn't let the Gen W crowd off the hook. Borrowing from the theories of psychologist Jean Twenge, author of *Generation Me*, Buckley sketches the rising cohort as cynical yet strangely easy to manipulate. Late in the novel, as Jepperson launches a run for president based on his appeal to the twenty-somethings, Cass advises him to adopt "Why Not?" as his campaign slogan. Soon after, bolstered by focus groups, she tells him the best way to court the youth vote is to tell the president to "shut the fuck up" in the midst of a campaign debate. Are readers supposed to swallow the idea that all it takes to woo the iPod crowd is a shrug and the staged authenticity of an expletive?

Still, while his characters' motivations might be simplistic—as befits a writer convinced that each of us operates primarily from self-interest—Buckley can't be faulted for lack of inventiveness. His baroque plotting largely manages to entertain while indicting the usual suspects: insatiable businessmen, corrupt priests, spineless politicians, amoral lobbyists and strong-arming pimps. A former speechwriter for George Bush Sr., and editor of *Forbes FYI*, Buckley is a whiz with snarky acronyms, and has an insider's understanding of media's levers and buttons.

Buckley's publishers share his interest in the well-chosen publicity op. *Boomsday* is the first product of a boutique imprint at Hachette Book Group called Twelve. The conceit is that it will publish only one book a month, devoting extraordinary resources to promoting each title. "We strive to publish the singular book, by authors who have a unique perspective and compelling authority," says Twelve's mis-

sion statement, "Works that explain our culture; that illuminate, inspire, provoke, and entertain. We seek to establish communities of conversation surrounding our books." And who will be speaking to whom to what end? A look at the first few authors tells the story: along with Buck-

***Boomsday* is not just another hard-working satire. It's a stunt within a stunt, a book about making a splash that itself is a cannonball into the deep end.**

ley, there's Christopher Hitchens holding forth on the poison that is religion, and John McCain on "great decisions and the extraordinary people who made them." In other words, Twelve is home to the self-styled maverick, the blowhard contrarian beloved by the corporate media. Bloggers will have a field day.

Which brings us to the crux of the matter: *Boomsday* is not just another hard-working satire, struggling to keep up with the absurdity of the era. It's a stunt within a stunt, a book about making a splash that itself is a cannonball into the deep end. You could even call it a "meta-political device," designed to re-prime the pump for a debate over Social Security privatization—a gambit that failed spectacularly despite Bush Jr.'s best efforts. Seen from that perspective, it just becomes tiresome.

Buckley depends on the most dire prognostications for Social Security, which, according to moderate and progressive economists, is not "in crisis" at all. Of course, he is exaggerating for effect: his vision of a bankrupt administration is an expression of his own disappointment with conservatives' current direction. In October, he expressed as much in a *Washington Monthly* article titled "Let's Quit While We're Behind":

Who knew, in 2000, that "compassionate conservatism" meant bigger government, unrestricted government spending, government intrusion in personal matters, government ineptitude, and cronyism in disaster relief? Who knew, in 2000, that the only bill the president would veto, six years later, would be one on funding stem-cell research? A more accurate term for Mr. Bush's political philosophy might be incontinent conservatism.

According to Buckley, then, the solution is some mixture of financial rectitude and parental responsibility: the government shouldn't promise benefits it can't afford to deliver, and the older generation should realize they're depending on a smaller generation of youngsters to foot the bill

for a bulge of retirees. Sounds nice, but it's an outlook shaped (excuse the reductive character assessment) by Buckley's up-market milieu.

Simply cutting federal spending won't help the bulk of Americans, including many Boomers, who aren't worried that they may have to pay estate taxes, or whining—like Cassandra—that they couldn't afford to go to Yale. Instead, policy priorities need to be shifted to support those citizens who are caring for their own aging parents, struggling to pay for education, maxing out their credit cards to pay doctor's bills, sitting on depreciating property and wondering about the stability of their jobs. They are the ones smacked around by the invisible hand, not lifted by it.

The publisher's PR materials and *Boomsday* itself make references to *Miami Herald* columnist and comic novelist Carl Hiaasen as a model satirist—the kind of conversation-starter that they hope to emulate. But Hiaasen is not just a humorist, he's a humanist. While his heroes and villains are caricatures, his protagonists are real people, dealing with issues like job loss and child support.

Like Buckley, Hiaasen might well target egotistical yuppies who expect government handouts without thought for the next generation. But he'd be equally hard on high-handed D.C. pundits who don't feel like paying taxes and can't see why they should be forced to.

Chris Buckley, I'm from Miami. Carl Hiaasen is a hero of mine. And you, sir, are no Carl Hiaasen. ■

JESSICA CLARK, In These Times' editor-at-large, has decamped from Miami to London, where she is a research associate at the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media.

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Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti handcuffed together at the Dedham courthouse.

MOVIES

The Lessons of Sacco and Vanzetti

By Annie Anderson

THIS YEAR MARKS the 80th anniversary of the execution of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. Convicted of a double murder after a notoriously corrupt trial, the anarchists went to their deaths maintaining their innocence.

Director Peter Miller's new documentary *Sacco and Vanzetti* follows the men's lives from their arrival in America to their infamous journey through the U.S. justice system during the '20s red scare.

Throughout their trial, they held to the paradoxical ideas that had guided them as activists. As the film's narrator puts it, "They believed in the America that they and their peers had rushed to—a place of political freedom, shared resources and diminished social stratification." And yet they realized, in Vanzetti's words, that "in no other country on earth does a man tremble before his fellow man like here."

The film is being distributed by First Run Features, known for its socially conscious films, which include *49 Up* and *Forgiving Dr. Mengele*. Though the two men have inspired numerous books, songs and feature films, this is the first documentary to chronicle their lives.

Miller tells their story through remembrances of relatives of those involved in the trial, historical footage and the words of the anarchists themselves. Actors John Turturro and Tony Shalhoub read from the diaries of Sacco and Vanzetti, their

voiceovers peppered amidst commentary by historians like Howard Zinn, Mary Anne Trasciatti and Studs Terkel. "I talk about the Sacco and Vanzetti case as often as I can. It's never very far from my mind," Zinn says. "There's always something that happens in the daily newspapers that brings that case to mind."

On May 5, 1920, Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested for the April 15 robbery and murder of a shoe factory paymaster, Frederick Parmenter, and his security guard, Alesandro Berardelli, in South Braintree, Mass. Miller sketches the details of the crime through interviews with Jeanette Parmenter Murphy, Frederick's daughter. When asked whether she thinks Sacco and Vanzetti killed her father, the elderly woman pauses, and then says, "Well, somebody did." Her answer symbolizes the open-ended and vexed stance with which the American judiciary handled this case.

Historian Nunzio Pernicone notes that Sacco and Vanzetti's plight brings to light "a lot of the mythology about American society. It shows what America's supposed to be about and what it has been in certain circumstances." A shoe-maker in Stoughton, Mass., Sacco awakened to the exploitation and poverty of his fellow workers. "Sacco came to the conclusion that the state per se, whether it's a capitalist state or a communist state, is the enemy of freedom and liberty," says Pernicone. "Consequently, of all the 'isms' available—socialism, syndicalism—anarchism was the ideology which to Sacco was the purest, the one which promised the greatest hope of human emancipation."

Vanzetti came to anarchism via social-

ism. Giuliano Montaldo, who directed the 1971 feature *Sacco and Vanzetti*, tells Miller, “Vanzetti was a man who wanted to learn. He read a lot. For him, Christ was a magnificent socialist. He was fascinated by this man who died for his ideas.”

The film follows the men’s journey from idealistic immigrants hoping to capture the American dream to incensed anarchists who joined up with Boston anarchist Luigi Galleani, an agitator who advocated violence against those he viewed as “capitalist oppressors.” At the onset of World War I, Sacco and Vanzetti fled to Mexico to live with Galleani in an anarchist commune, a trip that would be used as evidence that they had dodged the draft. When their experiment in communal living ended, the Galleanists returned stateside, where Sacco and Vanzetti subscribed to the Galleanisti writ of justice through acts of violence, such as the 1919 bombing at the home of Mass. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer. They reasoned that state violence—the enslavement of the working class in a cycle of poverty—was far worse than

their simple mail bombings.

Most historians agree that Sacco and Vanzetti’s arrest, trial and conviction was a miscarriage of justice prompted by America’s mistrust of foreigners and political dissenters. The notoriously anti-immigrant Judge Webster Thayer—described by Sacco as a “cobra in a black frock”—oversaw their trial, dismissing the testimony of dozens of witnesses favorable to Sacco and Vanzetti’s case. Meanwhile, a bullet and shell that many believed were planted at the murder scene were introduced as evidence, most likely to prompt a guilty verdict.

After Sacco and Vanzetti had been imprisoned for several years, Celestino Madeiros, a convicted criminal, confessed to the South Braintree murders, only to have his admission ignored when Thayer dismissed Sacco’s motion for a new trial. Thayer overruled Sacco and Vanzetti’s five appeals within a year of the guilty verdict, and all of the motions and petitions over the next six years, before sentencing them to death on April 9, 1927. They were sent to the electric chair on August 23.

The film lays bare the cruel machina-

tions of state power, disdained by Sacco and Vanzetti in life and, ironically, illustrated by them in death. The America of 1921 renewed itself through waves of immigration, and thus constantly dealt with foreigners in its midst. The case of Sacco and Vanzetti is important today, Trascatti says, because it speaks to the tension that pits individual civil liberties against collective national security. Despite its status as a hub of cultural influx in the early 20th century, America—or at least the grounded ruling class—had a healthy distrust of immigrants, anarchists, and other “others.”

The story of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti remains a clarion call for strict judicial oversight and the fierce protection of civil liberties. In his director’s statement, Miller puts it this way: “The case clearly has urgent lessons to offer Americans nearly eighty years after its tragic conclusion. As in the ‘red scare’ of Sacco and Vanzetti’s time, present-day Americans have allowed fear and jingoism to erode our civil liberties, scapegoat immigrants, and compromise our judicial system.” ■

[art space]



In 2005, radical knitter Lisa Anne Auerbach began the **Body Count Mittens project** to memorialize the escalating numbers of American soldiers killed in the Iraq war. “Some of us knit faster than others,” Auerbach explains in the pattern instructions, “and this too will be reflected in the finished pair, since the date on the mittens is the date each one was started.” The date is followed with the number of soldiers killed by that day.

“It’s morose to wear mittens emblazoned with these statistics,” Auerbach wrote on her blog. “But recognizing realities is necessary if we expect the world to change.” Auerbach has posted the mittens’ pattern for download on www.stealthissweater.com.

—Erin Polgreen

EXCERPT

Inside the Death Chamber

The following transcript was adapted from "Witness to an Execution," a radio documentary produced by Stacy Abramson and David Isay, which is included in the new book Writing for Their Lives: Death Row USA (University of Illinois Press), edited by Marie Mulvey-Roberts. "Witness to an Execution," which was originally presented on "All Things Considered," won a Peabody Award in 2000. To hear the complete broadcast or see more photographs by Andrew Lichtenstein taken during the making of the documentary, go to SoundPortraits.org.

Warden Jim Willett: I'm Jim Willett. I've overseen about 75 executions at the Walls Unit in Huntsville, Texas. I started as a guard here 29 years ago and have been warden since May of 1998. The Walls takes up almost two city blocks right in the middle of town. ... Since 1924 all executions in Texas have taken place right here. We've carried out a lot of executions here lately, and with all the debate about the death penalty I thought this might be a good time to let you hear exactly how we do these things. Sometimes I wonder whether people really understand what goes on down here and the effect it has on us.

Chaplain Jim Brazzil, Texas Department of Criminal Justice: I have been with 114 people at the time of their execution. ... I've had 'em where they wanted to sing. I had one offender tell lawyer jokes. ... And I've had 'em want to do exercises, do calisthenics sitting in there, you know, because it's such a nervous time. Because at that time reality has truly set in that in a few moments he's going to be dead.

[Warden Willett will] walk up to the cell where we are and he'll say, "It's time." And so they will unlock the cell and he's not handcuffed or chained. He's just sitting there. And he and I will walk into the chamber.

Willett: When he gets into the chamber, I'll tell him to sit down on the gurney and then lay down with his head on [the] pillow. At that time when he gets in



Reporter Leighanne Gideon witnessed her first execution at the age of 26. As a reporter for the *Huntsville Item* she saw 52 Texas prisoners executed.

there, all of the straps are undone. And within probably 30, 45 seconds the officers have him completely strapped in.

Major Kenneth Dean: I've participated in over a hundred executions as a member of the tie down team. Each supervisor is assigned a different portion—like we have a head person, a right arm, left arm, right leg, left leg. And the right leg man will tell him, "I need you to hop up onto the gurney. Lay your head on this end, put your feet on this end." Simultaneously while he's laying down the straps are being put across him.

Captain Terry Green: I'm a member of the tie down team in the execution process. What I do, I will strap the offender's left wrist. And then there are two belts—one that comes across the top of his left shoulder—and then another goes right straight across his abdominal area.

Dean: Some of them are very calm. Some of them are upset. Some of them are crying.

Green: Some of them have been sweat-

ing. Some of them will have the smell of anxiety, if you will, of fear.

Dean: Usually within about 20 seconds he's completely strapped down—20 to 30 seconds. I mean, it's down to a fine art. ... After all the straps are done they will look at you and they'll say, "Thank you." And here you've just strapped them into the table. And they look at you in the eye and tell you, "Thank you for everything that you've done." And, you know, that's kind of a weird feeling.

Willett: At 6:05 the medical team inserts the needles and hooks up the IVs. ... I have been somewhat surprised. It never crossed my mind that some of these people are just like the rest of us and are scared to death of a needle. Usually, if it goes right, and normally it does, usually in about three minutes they've got this guy hooked up to the lines. And at that time the inmate's lying on the gurney and myself and Chaplain Brazzil are in the execution chamber with the inmate.

Brazzil: I usually put my hand on their leg right below their knee, you know,

and I usually give 'em a squeeze, let 'em know I'm right there. You can feel the trembling, the fear that's there, the anxiety that's there. You can feel the heart surging, you know. You can see it pounding through their shirt.

Leighanne Gideon, former reporter for the Huntsville Item: I witnessed 52 executions. ... A lot of inmates apologize. A lot of inmates will say that you're executing an innocent man. And then there have been some men who have been executed that I knew, and I've had them tell me goodbye.

John Moritz, a reporter for the Forth Worth Star Telegram: The warden will remove his glasses, which is the signal to the executioners behind a mirrored glass window. And when the glasses come off, the lethal injection begins to flow.

Gideon: I was 26-years old when I witnessed my first execution. After the execution was over, I felt numb. And that's a good way to explain it. And a lot of people will tell you that, that it's just a very numb feeling afterwards. ... I've walked out of [the] death chamber numb and my legs feeling like rubber sometimes, my head maybe not really feeling like it's attached to my shoulders. I've been told that it's perfectly normal, everyone feels it, and that after a while that numb feeling goes away. And indeed it does.

Wayne Sorge, news director of KSAM in Huntsville: I have witnessed 162 executions by lethal injection in the state of Texas. ... I wrestle with myself about the fact that it's easier now, and was I right to make part of my income from watching people die? And I have to recognize the fact that what I do for a living is hold up a mirror to people of what their world is. Capital punishment is part of that, and if you are in the city where more capital punishment occurs than any place else in the civilized world, that's got to be part of the job.

Brazzil: I've had several of them where watching their last breath go from their bodies and their eyes never unfix from mine. I mean actually lock together. And I can close my eyes now and see those eyes. My feelings and my emotions are extremely intense at that time. I've never ... I've never really been able to describe

it. And I guess in a way I'm kind of afraid to describe it. I've never really delved into that part of my feelings yet.

Gideon: I've seen family members collapse in there. I've seen them scream and wail. I've seen them beat the glass.

Sorge: I've seen them fall into the floor, totally lose control. And yet how do you tell a mother that she can't be there in the last moments of her son's life?

Gideon: You'll never hear another sound like a mother wailing whenever she is watching her son be executed. There's no other sound like it. It is just this horrendous wail. You can't get away from it. That wail surrounds the room. It's definitely something you won't ever forget.

Willett: I do worry about my staff. I can see it in their eyes sometimes, particularly when we do a lot of executions in a short period of time. ... I'll be retiring next year and to tell you the truth this is something I won't miss a bit. There are times when I'm standing there, watching those fluids start to flow, and wonder whether what we're doing here is right. ■

MUSIC

Digital Revives the Indie Pop Star

By David Hadden

IN THIS NEW age of satellite radio and personalized playlists, only 35 percent of 18-to-34-year-olds are turning to the once mighty FM radio to find new artists. Meanwhile, online music sales nearly doubled last year to about \$2 billion, or 10 percent of all sales.

The reason, says Ben Zalman, radio promotion manager of the Planetary Group, a Boston based music promoter, is simple. "Although I don't think radio's days are numbered, people are getting more used to the on-demand style of consumption. If someone is in the mood to listen to Modest Mouse, they no longer have to hear the new Red Hot Chili Peppers hit five times before they can."


While Internet consumption patterns have yet to render mainstream radio irrelevant, to once marginalized independent artists and labels, it is the radio. It is where they market and sell their music. Mariella Luz from K Records, an under-

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

The further adventures of...

Conservative Jones, Boy Detective

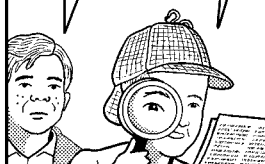


and his comically misguided sidekick, Moonbat McWacky!

This week: Multiple Mystery Mayhem!

HELLO, MOONBAT--YOU'RE JUST IN TIME! I BELIEVE I'VE FINALLY FIGURED OUT THE MYSTERY OF THE WALTER REED SCANDAL!

YOU MEAN YOU'VE DISCOVERED WHY WOUNDED IRAQ VETS WERE TREATED SO SHAMEFULLY?



OH, MOONBAT--WHERE DO YOU GET THESE FANCIFUL NOTIONS OF YOURS?

NO, I MEAN I'VE DISCOVERED THE REAL LESSON OF THE SCANDAL-- THAT GOVERNMENT-RUN HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS DON'T WORK!

ER--I'M NOT SURE THAT'S REALLY THE--

QUIET, MOONBAT! I'M TRYING TO CONCENTRATE ON--



--THE MYSTERY OF THE SCOOTER LIBBY VERDICT!

I THINK I KNOW THIS ONE! YOU SEE, THE ADMINISTRATION LIED ABOUT PRE-WAR INTEL AND TRIED TO COVER IT UP--

OH, MOONBAT! YOU ARE AS IMAGINATIVE AS YOU ARE MISTAKEN!

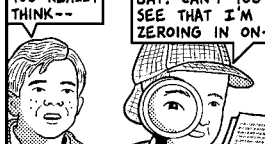


THE ACTUAL ANSWER IS THAT... THE JURORS WERE STUPID!

WHY--I DOUBT THEY WERE EVEN ABLE TO COMPREHEND WHY THEY WERE BEING ASKED TO SIT IN THAT COURTROOM! THE ENTIRE PROCEEDING WAS PROBABLY NOTHING MORE THAN A MEANINGLESS BLUR TO THEM!

UM--DO YOU REALLY THINK--

SILENCE, MOONBAT! CAN'T YOU SEE THAT I'M ZEROING IN ON--



--THE MYSTERY OF THE HARMLESS JOKE?

WHY WOULD ANYONE BE UPSET JUST BECAUSE ANN COULTER CALLED JOHN EDWARDS A 'FAGGOT'?

UH--BECAUSE IT'S AN INCREDIBLY HATEFUL AND OFFENSIVE WORD?

OH, MOONBAT! WILL YOU NEVER LEARN?

NEXT: CONSERVATIVE JONES SOLVES THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING GOOD NEWS FROM IRAQ!



ground pop institution that has nourished acts like Modest Mouse and Beck, says piracy is “still a good way for people to hear new music, and if in the end it means our bands have more fans, then I am not opposed to it.” Asked if such “borrowing” has adversely affected overall sales, Luz replies simply: “No.”

This response starkly contrasts to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). Representing major record companies, the RIAA recently sent more than 400 pre-litigation settlement letters to 13 different universities informing them of impending copyright infringement lawsuits against one of their students or personnel. Matt Zimmerman, an attorney from the Electronic Frontier Foundation, an organization advocating citizens' rights in the digital world, has called the lawsuits “remarkably short sighted.”

So how exactly are the indies doing it?

As a genre, “indie” is an umbrella term for rock bands that release music independently in order to retain creative freedom. Considering the parade of lip-synching blondes and boy bands on major labels, it isn't hard to imagine that, today, a young Bob Dylan or John Lennon would prefer being signed to an indie label. And while perspectives in indie rock range far beyond radical politics, an inherent desire to challenge, or at least ignore, corporate culture remains. In *Money for Nothing*, a 2001 documentary exploring the commercialization of popular music, Ian McKay, member of Fugazi and cofounder of independent label Dischord, said, “I have a lot of contempt for the record industry. To exist independent of the mainstream is a political feat, in my opinion.”

The very mainstream iTunes store has created a venue where even the most obscure artists can exist—and even thrive—independent of major labels. For instance, in most record stores, “you have to pay to get the placement, the listening stations, and posters, whereas with iTunes, the promotions are [staff] determined,” says Chris Jacobs of Sub Pop Records.

More importantly, 70 of the 99 cents of the download fee goes directly to the artist. With this more favorable exchange, and freed from the burdens of a major label's enormous cash advance, the independent artists benefit most. Apple's dominance of online retail—last year, they had more than \$1 billion in annual sales—has created a check on major labels. This was evident in 2005, when Apple refused the

excerpt



Ars Politica

In mid-January Rep. Phyllis Kahn, of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, introduced HF 0224 into the Minnesota State Legislature. The bill calls for the governor to appoint a state poet laureate and was written by House researcher Mark Shepard. The bill reads in part:

1. Appointment

The Gov' shall appoint a state poet laureate,
Who shall serve for a four-year term.
Because this appointment will always be great,
There's no need for the Senate to confirm.
In appointing a poet for the public good,
And to ensure there's no unjust omission,
The governor shall consider, if he would
Thoughts of the Humanities Commission.

2. Removal.

The poet will be free to write rhyming lines,
With removal only for cause,
But we trust that the bard will promptly resign,
If the verse reads as badly as laws.

3. Compensation.

'Twould be fair to provide some just recompense
As reward for the poet's tribulations,
But because at this time we haven't the cents
We're afraid there is no compensation.
But we ask as the poet travels the state,
And the people their ears they lend,
That our learned Commission take the position
To provide the poor poet a stipend.

majors' requests to raise downloading fees. If this benevolent giant's behavior is in any way indicative for the future of online retail, indie rock may have one less thing to be cynical about.

In addition, indies are leading the pack in ideas. Visit K Records' Web site and you'll find an online boutique of downloadable tracks at 50 cents a pop. According to the label, sales have been increasing monthly, and the site is adding more content. Meanwhile, Matador Records has adjusted to the fact that even its vinyl enthusiasts probably wear iPods and now provide codes so customers can download free mp3 copies of the vinyl they buy.

And though indie bands have always built audiences without the Top 40, the advent of Web 2.0 and resulting proliferation of niche markets make traditional means of promotion look inefficient. Stereogum, which averages about 13,000 hits a week, is one of many online communities that features user-generated reviews, features, and

videos of indie bands while unabashedly keeping the public up on the latest Britney headline. The Hype Machine, an aggregator of such blogs, updates hourly with dozens of new songs and their links to Amazon and iTunes. These user-generated sites not only empower listeners to decide what will be popular, but have the ability to do something a copy of *Rolling Stone* never could—play music. Hype Machine's Web site puts it this way: “We do this to let people discover new artists, fall in love, buy their CDs and go to their shows.”

In 2002, David Bowie presciently said, “Music itself is going to become like running water or electricity. You'd better be prepared for doing a lot of touring because that's really the only unique situation that's going to be left. It's terribly exciting.”

If big business continues losing its grip on its music industry monopoly, perhaps we'll see a more democratic arena where creativity can compete with commerce. ■

BY TERRY J. ALLEN

Gardasil, Iraqi Superbugs & Radiation



IN THESE TIMES started running "Health & Science" in January 2006. Below are three updates.

Gag me with a campaign

Merck's force-it-down-consumers'-throats-campaign for Gardasil proved a powerful emetic. The new vaccine protects against two of the HPV strains that cause 70 percent of cervical cancers, but consumers gagged on making vaccination mandatory for all pre-teen girls. Exposure of short drug trials and long money trails forced Merck to kill its campaign to make middle school entry contingent on vaccination.

Problems with process and tactics go deeper. According to FDA guidelines, its advisory committee members are "qualified experts with minimal conflicts of interest ... [who] provide FDA with independent advice." But at least two members of the FDA panel that approved Gardasil had been Merck executives: Merck research director, Dr. John Boslego, ended his decade-long tenure with the company only two months before his FDA committee found Gardasil safe and effective. Another member, Alan Shaw, had represented Merck as late as May 2005 when he presented a paper at the 4th International Conference on Cervical Cancer on the HPV. The FDA granted both men waivers, and found no disqualifying conflicts of interest.

Members of Women in Government, a bi-partisan group of former and current legislators, also pushed the ethical envelope. At its annual conference in January, WIG endorsed vaccination, but failed to inform all members that it would push legislation making Gardasil mandatory, or that WIG took Merck funding.

Maine legislator Andrea Boland sat in on a select planning session at the conference where organizers said WIG would hold off on setting the program until we "see what the sponsors want."

Her fellow Maine legislator, Marilyn Canavan, resigned from WIG after learning that it got Merck money. "The point is not that the vaccine is bad, but that the public agenda has all been company-driven," she said.

Superbugs: collateral damage

A new superbug—a rare strain of antibiotic-resistant bacteria—is infecting hundreds of wounded Iraq and Afghanistan vets. At first, the administration blamed the *acinetobacter baumannii* outbreak on something in Iraq—the soil, the insurgents.

It soon emerged that wherever the bacteria's origins, "the Pentagon had accidentally invented a machine for accelerating bacterial evolution and was airlifting the pathogens halfway around the world," writes Steve Silberman in a brilliant article for *Wired*. Soldiers carried the superbug—loaded with the most genetic upgrades ever found in a single organism—from battlefield hospitals to Walter Reed and VA and civilian facilities across the United States.

While some U.S. medical efforts in Iraq were heroic, others, gave lie to "support our troops" rhetoric. At Ibn Sina Hospital in the Green Zone, the first stop for many wounded Americans, "rainwater dripped into operating rooms and supply closets, and pigeons roosted in the ventilation system," Silberman wrote. "Clean sheets and scrubs were scarce ... because the civilian laundry contractor was apparently selling them on the black market."

Battlefield medicine, which relies on routinely dispensing multiple antibiotics in hopes that one will work, unwittingly promotes antibiotic resistance. As the March 2006 column, "Are Hospitals Hazardous to Your Health?"

noted, hospitals, filled with weakened patients and open wounds, are breeding grounds for emerging superbugs. Now, collateral damage from Bush's wars is riding home with the wounded and adding to that already dire threat.

The Grey Lady is glowing

In December 2006, H&S looked at a lung cancer study, noting that the benefits of early diagnosis with CT scans should be weighed against the risk of the radiation. That study and an article on it by *New York Times* health reporter Gina Kolata ignored the danger of exposing CT scan patients to 500 times more radiation than a conventional chest X-ray.

A new study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* shifted the balance, concluding that lung cancer screening with CT scans "does not appear to save lives and exposes people to serious risks of injury and even death from needless surgery," Kolata now writes in the March 7 *New York Times*. Again, the risks she reports did not include radiation exposure.

Kolata seems not to recognize that while radiation can treat and detect cancer, it can also cause it. She has written more than a dozen articles in the last five years mentioning radiation; almost all as a treatment. A few articles noted that radiation for prostate cancer can cause impotence or incontinence.

In one 2002 article, she noted, "Some doctors have worried that the radiation treatments usually given after a lumpectomy may cause cancers themselves." But she immediately counters with the chief of breast surgery at Sloan-Kettering, who cites two studies that "put that concern to rest."

The next year Kolata quoted another expert who finds some evidence that "low-level radiation seems to make cells hardier." Glow lady glow. ■

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Robben Island

Continued from back page

Located about 8 miles off the coast of Cape Town across a turbulent ocean strait, Robben Island was used as a hospital for leprosy patients and the mentally ill in the 1800s and early 1900s, and a military base during World War II. It has been used as a prison since the mid-1600s. Its inmates have included everyone from indigenous African leaders and Muslims from the East Indies to Dutch and British soldiers and civilians. Most infamously, it was the repository for anti-apartheid activists, including Nelson Mandela, who became the first democratically elected president after the fall of apartheid, and Pan Africanist Congress founder Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe.

In 1997, the former prison was turned into a museum and historical institute that aims to keep the stories of anti-apartheid activists and other political prisoners alive. A comprehensive electronic database of former prisoners is being compiled, and the museum holds an extensive collection of prison artifacts and former prisoners' belongings and writings, including testimony of more than 200 former prisoners. Its archive of prisoners' papers, including letters, internal correspondence, minutes of meetings, reports, political discussion papers, recreation plans and equipment orders, is called the "Apple Box Archives," because when prisoners were released, the last of them in 1991, they carried their possessions in apple boxes.

The museum's Web site describes the island today as a symbol "of oppression, as well as a place of triumph." It continues: "Overcoming opposition from the prison authorities, prisoners on the Island after the '60s were able to organize sporting events, political debates and educational programs, and to assert their right to be treated as human beings, with dignity and equality. They were able to help the country establish the foundations of our modern democracy."

The museum has published four books detailing prisoners' memories and three albums of prison music, including *Prison Songs: Cell Stories*, the project which brought Shezi, Sithole and Nxumalo together.

Jeff Spitz, a Chicago-based filmmaker, bought *Prison Songs* on CD in 2001 when he was in Cape Town screening his documentary *The Return of Navajo Boy*, which

details the toxic legacy of uranium mining in Navajo lands in the southwestern United States. Intrigued and disturbed that he had never heard of Robben Island, Spitz tracked the men down. He convinced them to come to the United States in 2002 for a performance at the Chicago Field Museum and began filming a documentary, along with South Af-

tary will help educate U.S. youth about one of the world's more recent legendary struggles against racism and oppression. At Chicago Academy High School, a student asks, "What did y'all do to get put in jail," seemingly baffled by their stories of covert military training in neighboring African countries and charges of treason.

"We could no longer fight with guns

Today, Robben Island is a symbol of 'oppression, as well as a place of triumph.' Its prisoners were able to help South Africa establish the foundations of a modern democracy.

rican filmmaker Mickey Madoda Dube, about the singers' lives and music.

One performance at the Robben Island Museum and the two Midwestern trips are still the only times the men have performed together in public. But they have vowed to bring their music to a wider audience, ideally performing their songs and sharing their stories in other U.S. cities, other countries and, most importantly, within South Africa.

"Youth has a way of moving on, moving fast and ignoring their parents," says Spitz, co-founder of Groundswell Educational Films. "Kids in South Africa are big on MTV and American music and their own hip hop culture. Like kids anywhere, they're not real keen to look back."

Shezi, 50, lives in the cottage on Robben Island that was once home to a prison guard. He works for the Robben Island Museum, tracking down and filming former prisoners for the museum archives. Sithole, 50, who previously worked as a museum guide, is now unemployed and lives in a poor township outside Durban. Nxumalo, 49, who was imprisoned for 13 years, lives in an upscale, formerly white-only Durban suburb. He works for a company that builds roads in rural areas.

Spitz sees the men's current situations as a microcosm of the way life has played out in post-apartheid South Africa, where most blacks still live in poverty and isolation. "Ordinary people in South Africa still live under economic apartheid," Spitz says. "Of these three guys who fought and sacrificed years of their lives for freedom and the chance to participate in their own country's economy, one is a rich man, one is unemployed and one is a cameraman."

Spitz and Dube hope their documen-

and spears. We had to form modern organizations to fight white people as equals," says Sithole. "The tribes, which used to all be separate, united against a common enemy, since we knew we couldn't defeat the white people on our own."

The group's recent three-week midwestern tour included visits to a handful of elementary schools, high schools and cultural centers in Chicago and East St. Louis, Ill., along with performances at the University of Illinois at Chicago and St. Sabina Catholic Church on the south side of Chicago, known for its social activism.

Asked whether Chicago, one of the country's most segregated cities, reminds him of the apartheid era, Shezi declines to pass judgment. "To make a big comment like that is difficult, because it's like looking through a window without seeing the other parts of the room inside," he says.

But in regard to East St. Louis, a 97 percent black city where 35 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, Shezi couldn't help but draw a comparison. "That's a real problem of infrastructure," he says of the city, where the singers visited an elementary school named after Mandela. "It has some similarities to our situation."

Shezi hopes that stories about the struggle against apartheid can help inspire young people in East St. Louis, Chicago's west side and other disenfranchised areas to stand up for their own rights.

"Struggle is like a flower: If you don't cultivate the soil, it will not bloom," he says. "We need to go to the schools, we need to continue this infinite process where we educate each new generation." ■

For more information, visit www.robben-islandsingers.com.



From the left:
Thembinkosi Sithole,
Muntu Nxumalo,
Grant Shezi

BY KARI LYDERSEN

ROBBEN ISLAND SINGERS

LET'S GO, LET'S GO and fight; we don't know where we're going, but fight we must," sing Grant Shezi, Muntu Nxumalo and Thembinkosi Sithole, harmonizing around a microphone in a high school auditorium on Chicago's West Side. "Let us take over, take over, they take our country and give us homelands, let us take over, take over, take our country the Castro way ..."

These lyrics are among the many that sustained Shezi, Sithole and Nxumalo during their multi-year stay at the infamous Robben Island Prison. As participants in the anti-apartheid struggle, they, along with thousands of other dissidents were jailed in the '70s and '80s on Robben Island, a small rocky island off the southwest coast of South Africa. The three men were incarcerated for their involvement in the African National Congress's (ANC) armed wing, the Umkhonto we Sizwe (or MK), which means "Spear of the Nation." Now, they are trying to keep the legacy of that struggle alive for the generation born after the end of apartheid in the early '90s.

"We would use songs to ease our hunger," Sithole tells a crowd of mostly African-American high school students at Chicago Academy High School during a February visit to the city. He described how the prisoners would often get only one bowl of gruel per day, which, though scalding hot, they had to eat with their hands until a hard-fought campaign forced their jailers to give them spoons.

"We spent most of our time in prison struggling to improve prison conditions," says Shezi, jailed in 1980 for 10 years after being charged with illegally leaving the country and membership in the banned ANC. "We were always studying politics and holding political classes and debates."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47